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**HALF-HOURS**  
**WITH THE**  
**SAINTS AND SERVANTS**  
**OF GOD.**

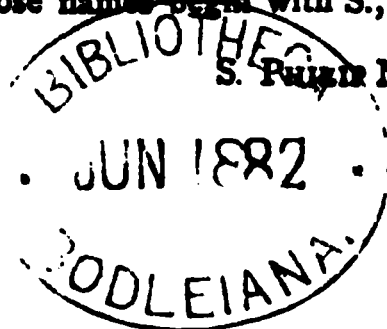
**INCLUDING**  
***BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES AND MANY TRANSLATIONS***

**BY CHARLES KENNY.**

**With a Preface by the**  
**VERY REVEREND W. T. GORDON,**  
**PROVOST OF THE ORATORY, LONDON.**

---

"It is very useful for those who minister the Word of God, or give themselves up to prayer, to read the works of authors whose names begin with S., such as Saint Augustine, Saint Bernard," &c.



**LONDON: BURNS AND OATES.**

**1882.**

*141. j. 523.*



**THIS VOLUME**

**IS DEDICATED TO**

**The Brothers of the Little Oratory,**

**IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF MANY A PLEASANT  
EVENING SPENT IN ST. WILFRID'S HALL,**

**BY**

**ONE WHO WAS THE SECRETARY**

**OF THE**

**FIRST ELECTED\* FATHER PREFECT OF THE  
LONDON LITTLE ORATORY.**

**\* Rev. Father Dalgairns, R.I.P.**



# A FEW NOTES

## *BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION.*

---

"HALF-HOURS WITH THE BEST AUTHORS," edited by that indefatigable author and publisher, Charles Knight, suggested the title of this volume.

The perusal of "La Bibliothèque des Predicateurs," par le R. P. Vincent Houdry, S.J., 18 vols. demy 8vo, suggested the contents; from this storehouse of learning, and from this monument of persevering industry, very many extracts have been translated and rendered into English.

In the "Bibliothèque" the subject matter of each half-hour is in alphabetical order, but my idea was, that if the contents were arranged and classified, the work would not only be more interesting, but better adapted for spiritual reading.

Care has been taken to select those authors who have made frequent allusions to the Saints, and greater care has been bestowed on the translations of passages which breathe a spirit of devotion and piety, so that the volume may be in accordance with the commendatory maxim



of my very dear Father and Patron Saint, St. Philip Neri.

The compiler and translator will be grateful for any suggested improvements, and any notification of errors, &c., &c., so that if a second edition should be called for, additions and alterations can be made.

*Charles Penny.*

26 HOWARD ROAD,  
DORKING, SURREY,

*Feast of SS. Philip and James,*

*Ap. 1882.*

# PREFACE.

---

SPIRITUAL reading is now so recognised a practice for all who wish to lead a devout life, that it is hardly necessary here to insist on its importance. It is, however, well to remind persons living in these times, that the present multiplication of periodical literature of every kind, is an additional reason for being faithful to the exercise of daily spiritual reading. The variety of subjects brought before the reader, the absence of deep thought or real principles, concealed by an attractive and brilliant style of writing, dissipate the mind, and gradually destroy, not only the habit, but even the power of serious reflection. We, therefore, who live in times of much reading and little thinking, have the greater need to spend some portion of our day, in reversing this process, in company with some book, which we read slowly, but from which, we can gain matter for much after-meditation.

The demand for spiritual reading for persons varying much in their capacity, tastes, and the amount of leisure at their disposal, justifies the multiplication of such books. And it is thought that the one now offered to the public has special advantages, which will make it prove a boon to many.

In spite of their goodwill, there are persons whose lives are so occupied, that they can give but little time to serious reading, and even those few moments, have to be snatched at uncertain times. For such as these, it is important to have a book which can bear to be so read. The editor of "Half-Hours with the Saints and Servants of God," has effected this, by arranging in short sections, extracts from various writers, all bearing on some one great truth or mystery of our holy religion. It would be well, indeed, to spend a half-hour in such good company, but the sections are so short, that one who has only ten minutes at his disposal would be able to read slowly and "*pausingly*," as S. Philip tells us such books should be read, words that would go far to sanctify the day.

The extracts are made from writers of every age, from St. Augustine, down to our own Father Faber, and many of the quotations, are from books, quite out of the reach of ordinary readers. Moreover, the editor has wisely added a short account of the life of the Saint, or servant of God, whose work he quotes, and this not only adds much to the interest of the work, but may lead those who have time at their disposal, to cultivate a taste for solid reading. They will learn the beautiful thoughts of men whom they have hitherto known only by name, and they will become anxious to know more of the history of their times, and of the circumstances in which they wrote. Thus, ecclesiastical history and the biographies of the great Christian writers, will acquire a new interest in their minds, and who can say, how great a blessing a taste for such reading may prove? Many, whose lives are now full of activity, may have before them, through ill health or old age, long years

of enforced inactivity; and a taste for reading will save them from many temptations, and make these years, a time, not only of tranquil enjoyment, but of much profit to their souls. Those who have been faithful in the practice of daily spiritual reading, know from experience how great is the fruit derived from it. Thoughts are suggested, which prove a safeguard against some sudden temptation which comes to them during the day, or they gain a light which enables them to answer some specious but shallow blasphemy uttered in their presence, or some cross which would otherwise have betrayed them into impatience, is welcomed as a gift from God.

These "Half-hours with the Saints and Servants of God," will thus enable many to profit by the few minutes they can give to spiritual reading, while they will suggest to others, who have more time at their disposal, in what books they may seek for treatises suited to their spiritual needs.

The long experience of Mr. Charles Kenny is a guarantee for the literary excellence of the book,—of the spiritual merit of which I have alone been speaking.

WILLIAM T. GORDON.



# LIST OF CONTENTS

*CLASSIFIED AND DIVIDED INTO EIGHT PARTS.*



## Part the First.

ON GOD, HIS ATTRIBUTES, GIFTS, GRACES, &c.

	PAGE
1. ON THE LOVE OF GOD, . . . . . St. Francis of Sales and Father Segneri.	I
2. ON THE HOLY FEAR OF GOD, . . . . . Père Bretteville, Fathers Faber, Nouet, and St. Gregory.	5
3. ON THE HOLY WILL OF GOD, . . . . . Père Nepveu, Massillon, and St. Augustine.	9
4. ON THE WORD OF GOD, . . . . . Père de la Porte, Massillon, and SS. Francis and Cyprian.	12
5. ON THE LAW OF GOD, . . . . . SS. Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Cyprian.	16
6. ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD, . . . . . Père Nepveu and Father Faber.	21
7. ON THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, . . . . . St. Chrysostom, Père Croiset, and St. Augustine.	24
8. ON THE SERVICE OF GOD, . . . . . Archdeacon Boudon and Father Faber.	27
9. ON THE WANT OF FERVOUR IN GOD'S SERVICE, . . . . . Bourdaloue, Père Croiset, and St. Augustine.	31

	PAGE
10. ON THE MERCY OF GOD, . . . . .	35
Père de la Colombière and Father Faber.	
11. ON GOD'S MERCY IN OUR ILLNESSES, . . . . .	38
Father Spinola, S.M. Père Nouet, and St. Ambrose.	
12. ON GOD'S MERCY IN AFFLICTIONS, etc., . . . . .	42
St. Chrysostom and Fléchier.	
13. ON THE ACTUAL GRACE OF GOD, . . . . .	45
St. Ælred, Massillon, and Bourdaloue.	
14. ON THE SANCTIFYING GRACE OF GOD, . . . . .	49
Cardinal Bellarmin, Père Duneau, and St. Leo.	
15. ON CONFIDENCE IN GOD, . . . . .	53
Pères Houdry and De la Colombière.	
16. ON ZEAL FOR GOD, . . . . .	56
Fathers Lambert, Croiset, and Nouet.	

---

## Part the Second.

### ON GOD THE SON AND GOD THE HOLY GHOST.

17. ON THE INCARNATION, . . . . .	60
SS. Bernard, Athanasius, Jerome, and Père Grenada.	
18. ON THE DIVINITY OF OUR SAVIOUR, . . . . .	64
Cardinal Bérulle and Père Dozennes.	
19. ON BELIEF IN CHRIST OUR LORD, . . . . .	69
Massillon, Fromentière, and St. Jerome.	
20. ON THE LOVE OF JESUS FOR MEN, . . . . .	72
Père Eusèbe Nieremberg.	
21. ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, . . . . .	75
Père du Jarry and St. Augustine.	
22. ON THE CIRCUMCISION, . . . . .	79
Bourdaloue, Father Faber, and St. Bernard.	

## CONTENTS.

xv

	PAGE
23. ON THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS, . . . . . Père Nouet, S.J.	83
24. ON THE EPIPHANY, . . . . . SS. Augustine, Chrysostom, and Père Montmorel.	86
25. ON THE INFANCY AND HIDDEN LIFE OF JESUS, . . . . . Pères Croiset and Nouet, S.J.	89
26. ON THE TRANSFIGURATION, . . . . . Father du Pont, S.J.	92
27. ON THE WASHING OF THE FEET, . . . . . Rev. Père Houdry, S.J., and St. Leo.	95
28. ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD, . . . . . Pères de la Colombière and Nouet.	98
29. ON JESUS RISEN, . . . . . Bourdaloue.	102
30. ON THE SACRED HEART AND WOUNDS, . . . . . Cardinal Peter Damien, Père Biroat, and St. Bernard.	105
31. ON THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS, . . . . . SS. Chrysostom and Augustine.	109
32. ON THE ASCENSION, . . . . . Pères de la Colombière, Le Valois, and St. Bernard.	112
33. ON THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST, . . . . . St. Chrysostom and Fléchier.	116
34. ON THE MOST HOLY TRINITY, . . . . . Pères Houdry and De la Colombière.	119

---

## Part the Third.

### ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND OF OUR LADY'S FEASTS.

35. ON DEVOTION TO THE MOTHER OF GOD, . . . . . Henri-Marie Boudon, Archdeacon, and St. Bernard.	123
---	-----



	PAGE
36. ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, . . . . .	127
Pères Houdry, De la Colombière, and St. Bernard.	
37. ON THE NATIVITY OF MARY, . . . . .	131
Père Verjus.	
38. ON THE HOLY NAME OF MARY, . . . . .	134
Père D'Argentan.	
39. ON THE PRESENTATION OF MARY, . . . . .	137
Père Houdry, S.J.	
40. ON THE ANNUNCIATION, . . . . .	140
Bourdaloue and St. Gregory.	
41. ON THE VISITATION, . . . . .	144
Pères du Jarry and D'Argentan.	
42. ON THE PURIFICATION, . . . . .	147
Bourdaloue and Father Faber.	
43. ON THE SEVEN DOLOURS, . . . . .	151
From " <i>Essais de Sermons</i> " and Father Faber.	
44. ON THE ASSUMPTION, . . . . .	155
Père Nouet.	
45. ON THE HOLY ROSARY, . . . . .	158
Father Faber and Père Nicolas de Dijon.	
46. ON OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL, . . . . .	162
Père de la Colombière.	

---

### Part the Fourth.

#### ON OUR HOLY MOTHER THE CHURCH, AND OF THE SACRAMENTS ADMINISTERED IN THE CHURCH.

47. ON THE HOLY CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH. . . . .	165
Père Texier and Fléchier.	
48. ON THE TREASURES OF THE CHURCH, . . . . .	168
Père Texier.	

## CONTENTS.

xvii

PAGE

49.	ON THE MINISTRY OF GOD'S CHURCH,	.	.	.	171
	Fléchier and St. Jerome.				
50.	ON MATERIAL CHURCHES,	.	.	.	175
	Fléchier and St. Chrysostom.				
51.	ON SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS,	.	.	.	179
	Père Montmorel and Discours Chrétiennes.				
52.	ON FASTINGS AND ABSTINENCE,	.	.	.	182
	Père de la Colombière.				
53.	ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM,	.	.	.	185
	St. Chrysostom, Père Nepvue, and St. Leo.				
54.	ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE,	.	.	.	189
	Bourdaloue and Père Masson.				
55.	ON HOLY COMMUNION,	.	.	.	192
	Pères Castillo, Vaubert, and St. Cyprian.				
56.	ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST AS A SACRIFICE,	.	.	.	195
	Fléchier.				
57.	ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST AS A SACRAMENT,	.	.	.	198
	Father Faber, Père Garnier, and St. Cyprian.				
58.	ON THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY,	.	.	.	202
	Père Cordier.				

---

## Part the Fifth.

### ON THE WORLD AND SIN.

59.	ON THE WORLD AND ITS DANGERS,	.	.	.	205
	St. Augustine, Fléchier, and Père Croiset.				
60.	ON THE WORLD AND ITS MAXIMS,	.	.	.	208
	St. Ambrose, Massillon, and St. Augustine.				
61.	ON THE WORLD AND ITS DUTIES,	.	.	.	212
	St. Chrysostom and Père Texier.				

	PAGE
62. ON THE WORLD AND ITS HONOURS AND DIGNITIES, . . . . .	215
Père De la Colombière and St. Gregory.	
63. ON MORTAL SIN, . . . . .	218
Pères Texier, Berthier, and St. Cyprian.	
64. ON VENIAL SIN, . . . . .	222
Pères De la Colombière and Segneri.	
65. ON HABITUAL SIN, . . . . .	225
St. Augustine, Père Biroat, and St. Bernard.	
66. ON OCCASIONS OF SIN, . . . . .	228
Massillon and Bossuet.	
67. ON FREQUENT RELAPSES INTO SIN, . . . . .	231
Bourdaloue.	
68. ON FINAL IMPENITENCE, . . . . .	234
Massillon, De la Colombière, and St. Chrysostom.	

## Part the Sixth.

### ON THE VICES WE SHOULD FLEE FROM.

69. ON AMBITION, . . . . .	238
Pères Houdry and Croiset, S.J.	
70. ON ANGER, . . . . .	240
SS. Basil, Chrysostom, and Ambrose.	
71. ON AVARICE, . . . . .	243
St. Chrysostom and Massillon.	
72. ON ATHEISM AND INFIDELITY, . . . . .	246
SS. Augustine and Cyprian.	
73. ON BLASPHEMY, . . . . .	250
La Morale Chrétienne and St. Chrysostom.	
74. ON CALUMNY AND SLANDER, . . . . .	253
Bourdaloue and SS. Chrysostom and Bernard.	

# CONTENTS.

xix

	PAGE
75. ON DISCORD, LAW-SUITS, &C., . . . . . Père Lejeune, Homélies Morales, and St. Ambrose.	256
76. ON EFFEMINACY AND SENSUALITY, . . . . . Le Père Haineuve.	260
77. ON ENVY AND JEALOUSY, . . . . . SS. Cyprian, Chrysostom, and Basil.	263
78. ON FLATTERY, . . . . . "Guerre aux vices," and SS. Basil and Jerome.	267
79. ON GAMBLING, . . . . . Pères Giroust and Bourdaloue.	271
80. ON HARDNESS OF HEART, . . . . . Bishop Mascaron, and Pères Nouet and Nepvue.	274
81. ON HYPOCRISY, . . . . . Bourdaloue and Dictionnaire Morale.	277
82. ON IDLENESS AND SLOTH, . . . . . Bourdaloue.	280
83. ON IGNORANCE, . . . . . Père La Font.	283
84. ON IMMODEST ATTIRE, FASHION, &C., .. . . . SS. Chrysostom and Cyprian.	286
85. ON IMPURITY, . . . . . St. Basil, Pères Houdry and De la Rue.	289
86. ON INGRATITUDE, . . . . . SS. Chrysostom and Ambrose, and Bourdaloue.	292
87. ON INTEMPERANCE, . . . . . Pères De la Colomblère, Houdry, S.J., and St. Ambrose.	295
88. ON LYING AND TRICKERY, . . . . . Pères Houdry, Heliodore, and St. Augustine.	299
89. ON PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED, . . . . . St. Augustine and Massillon.	302
90. ON RASH JUDGMENTS, . . . . . SS. Francis de Sales, John of God, Augustine, and L'Abbé de la Trappe.	305

	PAGE
91. ON SCANDAL, . . . . .	309
Bourdaloue, St. Cyprian, and Père Houdry.	
92. ON SELF-LOVE, . . . . .	312
Pères Louis de Grenada, Camaret, and St. Augustine.	
93. ON THEATRES, BALLS, &C., . . . . .	315
Fenelon, St. Francis de Sales, and Lanctantius.	
94. ON THEFT AND LARCENY, . . . . .	319
Père Lejeune.	
95. ON VAIN GLORY, . . . . .	322
SS. Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Rodriguez.	
96. ON ALL OUR BAD PASSIONS, . . . . .	326
Pères A. Rodriguez, Nepvue, and St. Philip Neri.	

---

### Part the Seventh.

#### ON THE VIRTUES WE SHOULD PUT INTO PRACTICE.

97. ON ALMS-DEEDS, . . . . .	330
St. Chrysostom and Pères Houdry and Faber.	
98. ON KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS, . . . . .	333
Père Lambert.	
99. ON CONSCIENCE, . . . . .	335
Bourdaloue.	
100. ON THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS, . . . . .	338
Bourdaloue and Père Houdry.	
101. ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME, . . . . .	341
Pères Segneri and Croiset.	
102. ON FAITH, . . . . .	345
Fléchier and Père La Font.	

# CONTENTS.

xxi

	PAGE
103. ON FRIENDSHIP, . . . . . SS. Francis of Sales, Chrysostom, and Jerome.	348
104. ON GOOD EXAMPLE, . . . . . Père Texier.	351
105. ON GOOD WORKS, . . . . . St. Chrysostom and Père Segneri.	354
106. ON HOLINESS AND PERFECTION, . . . . . St. Ambrose and Père D'Argentan.	357
107. ON HUMAN RESPECT, . . . . . Massillon and St. Gregory.	360
108. ON HUMILITY, . . . . . St. Francis de Sales and Father Faber.	363
109. ON LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR, . . . . . SS. Bernardine of Sienna, &c., &c.	366
110. ON LOVE OF OUR ENEMIES, . . . . . Carranza, Le Père Joly, and St. Gregory Naz.	369
111. ON MEDITATION AND MENTAL PRAYER, . . . . . St. Francis of Sales, Massillon, and Rodriguez.	372
112. ON MEEKNESS, . . . . . SS. Ambrose and Augustine.	375
113. ON MODESTY, . . . . . St. Ambrose and Père A. Rodriguez.	378
114. ON MORTIFICATION, . . . . . Pères Segneri, Croiset, and St. Bernard.	382
115. ON OBEDIENCE, . . . . . SS. Francis of Sales, Gregory, and Père Lambert.	386
116. ON ORDER AND REGULARITY, . . . . . Le Père Haineuve and St. Augustine.	390
117. ON PENANCE AS A VIRTUE, . . . . . Bourdaloue.	393

	PAGE
118. ON PERSEVERANCE, . . . . .	396
Pères Antoine de la Porte Croiset and St. Philip Neri.	
119. ON PIETY AND DEVOTION, . . . . .	400
St. Bernard and Père Croiset.	
120. ON POVERTY, VOLUNTARY, &C., . . . . .	403
Fathers Sarrazin, Faber, and St. Bernard.	
121. ON PRAYER, . . . . .	406
SS. Francis, Augustine, Philip Neri, and Fenelon.	
122. ON PREDESTINATION, . . . . .	410
Pères Houdry and Croiset.	
123. ON PRUDENCE, . . . . .	413
St. Basil and Père Giroust.	
124. ON PURITY AND CHASTITY, . . . . .	416
SS. Astère and Ambrose.	
125. ON RELIGION, . . . . .	419
Bourdaloue, De la Colombière, and St. Bernard.	
126. ON RETREATS, . . . . .	423
SS. Ephrem, Gregory, and Père le Valois.	
127. ON RICHES—USE AND ABUSE, . . . . .	427
SS. Chrysostom, Basil, and Massillon.	
128. ON THE EXCELLENCE OF THE SOUL, . . . . .	430
Pères Houdry, Nepvue, Bretteville, and St. Chrysostom.	
129. ON THE PEACE OF THE SOUL, . . . . .	433
Father Segneri, SS. Edmond of Canterbury and Augustine.	
130. ON SALVATION, . . . . .	437
SS. Ephrem, Chrysostom, and Père Nepvue.	
131. ON TEMPTATIONS, . . . . .	440
SS. Chrysostom, Francis, Augustine, and Rodriguez.	
132. ON VOCATION TO A STATE OF LIFE, . . . . .	444
Père Nepvue, Massillon, and St. Philip Neri.	

---

# Part the Eighth.

## ON THE LAST FOUR THINGS.

	PAGE
133. ON DEATH—IN GENERAL, . . . . . Fathers Segneri and Faber.	447
134. ON DEATH—A GOOD AND BAD ONE, . . . . . SS. Bernard, Philip Neri, and Pères Giroust and Houdry.	450
135. ON THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT, . . . . . Pères Du Pont and Croiset.	454
136. ON THE LAST JUDGMENT, . . . . . Bourdaloue and Père Segneri.	457
137. ON PURGATORY, . . . . . On what the Saints have written on this subject.	460
138. ON HELL, . . . . . Fathers Biroat and Faber.	463
139. ON HEAVEN, . . . . . St. Chrysostom and Pères Croiset and Nepvue.	466

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*For Alphabetical Indices, see end of Volume.*





# HALF-HOURS

WITH THE

## SAINTS AND SERVANTS OF GOD.

---

### 1.—On the Love of God.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES and FATHER SEGNERI.

“This only take care of with all diligence, that you love the Lord your God.”  
—JOSUE xxiii. 1.

[ST. FRANCIS DE SALES was born at the Castle of Sales, in the diocese of Geneva, August 21, 1567.

Leigh Hunt, the most charming of our modern essayists, has left us an interesting article in his “London Journal” (February 4, 1835) on this grand saint and doctor. He says that, “like Fénelon, he was a sort of angel of a gentleman; a species of phoenix which, we really must say, the French Church seems to have produced beyond any other.”

After the death of Bishop Granier, Francis was appointed Bishop of Geneva. This was on the 8th of December 1602.

He continued to discharge all the duties of a saintly prelate till the year 1622, when he died of an apoplexy, at Lyons, December 28, aged fifty-six, leaving several religious works, collected in two volumes folio. He was canonised in 1665.

For his Life, &c., see Marsollier, Moreri, Disct. Hist., Butler, &c. &c.]

LOVE is strong as death (*Cant.* viii. 6): since both equally separate the soul from the body and all terrestrial things, the only difference is, that the separation is real and effectual when caused by death, whereas that occasioned by love is usually confined to the heart.

I say usually, because divine love is sometimes so violent that it actually separates the soul from the body, and, by causing the death of those who love, it renders them infinitely happier than if it bestowed on them a thousand lives.

As the lot of the reprobate is to die in sin, that of the elect is to expire in the love and grace of God, which is effected in several ways.

Many of the Saints died, not only in the state of charity, but in the actual exercise of divine love. St. Augustine expired in making an act of contrition, which cannot exist without love; St. Jerome, in exhorting his disciples to charity and the practice of all virtues; St. Ambrose, in conversing sweetly with his Saviour, whom he had received in the Holy Eucharist; St. Antony of Padua also expired in the act of discoursing with our Divine Lord, after having recited a hymn in honour of the ever-glorious Virgin; St. Thomas of Aquinas, with his hands clasped, his eyes raised to heaven, and pronouncing these words of the Canticles, which were the last he had expounded: "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field" (*Cant.* vii. 11).

All the apostles, and the greater number of the martyrs, died in prayer. Venerable Bede, having learned the hour of his death by revelation, went to the choir at the usual hour to sing the evening office, it being the feast of the Ascension, and at the very moment he had finished singing vespers, he expired, following his Guide and Master into heaven, to celebrate His praises in that abode of rest and happiness, round which the shades of night can never gather, because it is illumined by the brightness of the eternal day, which neither dawns nor ends.

John Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, remarkable for his learning and virtue—of whom Sixtus of Sienna said, "that it is difficult to decide whether the

vein of piety which runs through his works surpasses his science, or whether his learning exceeds his piety"—after having explained the fifty properties of divine love mentioned in the Canticles, expired at the close of three days, smiling, and pronouncing these words of the same sacred text: "Thy love, O God, is strong as death" (*Cant.* viii. 6).

The fervour and ardour of St. Martin at the hour of his death are remarkable. St. Louis, who has proved himself as great a monarch among the Saints as an eminent saint among kings, being attacked by the plague, ceased not to pray, and after receiving the viaticum, he extended his arms in the form of a cross, fixed his eyes on heaven, and, animated with love and confidence, expired in saying with the Psalmist: "I will come into Thy house, O Lord; I will worship towards Thy holy temple, in Thy fear" (*Ps.* v. 8).

St. Peter Celestine, after having endured the most cruel and incredible afflictions, seeing the end of his days approach, began to sing like the swan, and terminated his song with his life, by these words of the last Psalm: "Let every spirit praise the Lord" (*Ps.* cl. 5).

St. Eusebiâ, surnamed the Stranger, died kneeling in fervent prayer. St. Peter the Martyr yielded his last sigh in writing (with his finger, which he had dipped in his blood) the articles of the faith for which he sacrificed his life, and in saying: "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit" (*Ps.* xxx. 6).

The great apostle of the Indies and Japan, St. Francis Xavier, expired holding a crucifix, which he tenderly embraced, and incessantly repeated in transports of love: "O Jesus! the God of my heart!"

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

*From his Treatise on "The Love of God."*

[PAUL SEGNERI, S.J., was born in the year 1624, at Nantes. From an early age he showed a predilection for the religious state. He united the functions of missionary with that of preacher during the space of twenty-seven years, with a zeal truly apostolic. This indefatigable religious and saintly director, worn out with hard work and austerities, yielded up his soul to God in the year 1694, aged seventy.]

The saintly Father Segneri tells us that the sure way of gaining heaven, without much cost, is by making frequent acts of the love of God, and by accustoming ourselves to do everything with the intention of pleasing Him.

We shall no longer be tempted to complain that we cannot undertake such great things as we so much admire in others.

God is content if we do all we can to love Him in our sphere of life, and He asks for nothing more. You sometimes regret that you cannot practise great austerities, which no doubt are due to Him for our past sins.

Supply for these in another way, replace those fastings and watchings by fervent acts of love; He requires nothing more.

You are engaged here below in temporal affairs; domestic cares, perchance, occupy your time. Well, do all these with the intention of pleasing Him, and God will be as content as if you had undertaken the worthy functions of an apostolate.

By what way, do you think, did the Saints attain to the perfection of holiness? It was less by their heroic actions than by the great love they showed in performing their lesser duties. Our Saviour does not praise Mary Magdalen for having done much, but for having loved much. Magdalen had not then practised austerities, but the love of Jesus had filled her heart with torrents of tears.

P. SEGNERI.  
*Meditations.*

## 2.—On the Holy Fear of God.

FATHERS BRETTEVILLE, FABER, NOUET, and  
ST. GREGORY.

“With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed.”—ECCLES. i. 13.

[L'ABBÉ DE BRETTEVILLE, born in the year 1630 at Bretteville, near Caen in Normandy. In the year 1667 he entered the Society of Jesus, which order he, however, abandoned in 1678. He died in 1688.]

THE fear of the terrible judgment of God is necessary to lead a sinner back to repentance, but love must be added to fear to make this repentance perfect.

It seems to me that there is implanted in the heart of man two natures; both combined will contribute to his conversion, and make it perfect and secure. *In toto corde vestro.*

There is in the heart an inferior nature, which is more worldly, and which can only be moved by sensible things; fear is for this portion of the heart; for it is by the contemplation of hell and the fearful consequences of vice that seizes the heart of man and turns it away from sin.

But there is in this same heart a superior celestial nature, which is only susceptible of the dawn of grace. This is love; this is that divine charity which moves that portion of the heart, and which makes it seek God for God's sake alone.

The conversion of the heart begins with fear and finishes with love.

To return to God simply through fear is, so to say, on'

half the battle. In order that we may be all for God, we must combine love with fear.

Is not the love of God sufficient, says the great St. Augustine, to make us avoid sin? Was it needful to employ fear and terrible threats? *Timor in adjutorium amoris excitandus fuit.*

At least—if fear did what love should do, we should have less to complain of—what is so shocking is, that nowadays we have reached that pitch of indifference which is neither moved by fear nor by love, and that the most frightful things do not make any impression on our hearts.

BRETTEVILLE.  
*Essays.*

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[FATHER FABER.—This celebrated and justly appreciated Oratorian Father died on September 26, 1863. The reader is referred to Father John Bowden's interesting Life of this zealous servant of God.

Suffice it to say, that his hymns are sung throughout the length and breadth of the land, that his works have been translated in many an European language, and that his preaching entitled him to the name of the modern Chrysostom; for truly, like to that great saint and doctor, he was "honey-mouthed."]

The loss of holy fear is the mischief of all mischiefs. For this fear is a special gift of the Holy Ghost, to be sought for by prayer and penance, by tears and cries, by patience and impatience, and by the very yearnings of an earnest and familiar love. It has always seemed to me very and unexpectedly beautiful when in the special office of St. Philip Neri, knowing what manner of man he was, and what peculiar spirit he was of, it says in the antiphon of the Magnificat, "Come, my children, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord;" for how else shall the saint teach us divinest love?

Let us pass in review before ourselves the ancient patriarchs and their deep awe of God ; how they trembled with holy fear when God was nigh, and looked upon all things as unspeakably hallowed over which He had so much as cast His shadow.

Jacob, who was so familiar with Him that he wrestled with Him, and would not let Him go till He had blessed him, stands eminent among the Saints of God for the gift and grace of fear. The very ritual of the old synagogue was steeped in fear and reverence. David, the man after God's own heart, was ever praying for an increase of holy fear. Our Blessed Lord himself, says the Apostle, in the days of His flesh was heard because He feared. Mary and the Apostles were filled, as none others ever were, with the beauty, the tenderness, and the excess of this heavenly fear.

Hundreds of dying Saints, around whose flesh and souls still clung the fair white robe of their unforfeited baptismal whiteness, trembled in every limb as they pondered the possible judgments of Infinite Purity, beneath whose judicial eye they were about to stand.

If they needed this degree of fear, what degree need we?

Why do frustrate vocations so abound ? Whence come the multitude of unfinished saints, that lie all around us like the broken models of a sculptor's studio ?

Whence so little perseverance in the devout life, and such wearying and untying even of the vows and promises whereby men have bound themselves to God ?

Whence but from the lack of fear !

FATHER FABER (Orat.)  
*On the Blessed Sacrament.*

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[PÈRE NOUET was born at Mans in 1605. He entered the Society of Jesus at the early age of twenty. He is chiefly known for his ascetic works, which are still read and studied with great profit. His beautiful meditations have been translated into the English language.

He died in Paris in the year 1680, aged seventy-five.]

There is nothing so bold, nothing more secure, than the fear of God.

He who fears God, fears naught else; and he who has a dread of displeasing Him, or a fear of forfeiting His love, does not shrink from suffering—cares not if he lose all, provided he be in a state of grace.

It is said that love banishes fear; but it is the baneful fear of man, or that servile and imperfect fear which dreads the shame of sin more than the sin that brings the shame.

I say more than this. There are times when it is necessary to fortify the fear of sin by the fear of hell, in order to strengthen us in the love of God; as when we are assailed by some violent temptation, which is not so easy to overcome if we are not well grounded in the fear of God.

Let us, then, henceforth combine fear with love. These are the two supports of the soul which attach us to God, like unto His mercy and justice which go hand in hand together. Do not let us sever the one from the other, if we wish to walk on the road to heaven without swerving from the paths of perfection.

Let us often say with humility that prayer of the Church: "Make us, O Lord, keep always before our eyes the love and fear of Your holy Name."

PÈRE NOUET, S.J.  
*Meditations*, vol. vii.

. . . . .

If a depraved mind be not shaken and humbled by the fear of God, it will never amend its habitual sins.

ST. GREGORY.  
*Hom. iv. on the Gospels.*

### 3.—The Will of God.

PÈRE NEPVEU, MASSILLON, and  
ST. AUGUSTINE.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

—MATTHEW VI. 10.

[FATHER F. NEPVEU, born at St. Malo in the year 1639, embraced the Society of the Jesuits in 1654. He was at the head of the College at Rennes, where he died in the year 1708. All the works of this learned Jesuit are replete with earnest piety.

A list of his numerous works may be found in Moreri's Dictionary.]

Is there any evil in the city, says the prophet, that God has not made?

Sin, the only evil that God does not will, He simply permits, but the consequences of sin He wills. He condemns the envy of Joseph's brethren, but He wills the effect, which was the slavery of Joseph. He had a horror of the rage of the Jews, but He willed and ordained the death of our Lord, which was the consequence. He will punish the injury which is done to you, but He wills the loss or affliction it causes you.

Why not complain of these evils when looked at in themselves? but wherefore murmur when we look upon them as the will of God? God wills it! Ah, that has a great weight with a man who has faith, who knows and loves God. A good Christian, would he dare to say, God wills it, but I wish it not?

Our perfection consists in doing the will of God, and it is for us to submit. The will of God is infinitely holy. If this be the rule of all sanctity, we are then holy in proportion to our conformity to His will.

Jésus Christ is our model, and we are saintly when we are like unto Him; and we are so much the more like Him in proportion to our conformity to the will of God. Thus does He not say that He is not come to do His will, but that of His Father?

In fine, our perfection and holiness consists in charity. Charity is the fulfilment of the law, says St. Paul. Perfect charity consists in doing the will of God in the highest sense it can be placed. "He who keeps my commandments and does my will," says Jesus Christ himself, "is he who loves me" (*John* xiv.)

You are sometimes in anxiety; if you love God, that is a just subject of uneasiness. If you are always ready to do His will and to submit to it, then be sure that you love Him.

Conformity to the will of God also makes a man happy as God, who is happiness itself.

What is it that makes God infinitely happy? It is that He does all that He wills; it is that He wills all that is good; it is that He finds in Himself all the good that He wills.

Thus a man perfectly conformed to the will of God possesses all these blessings.

He does what he wills because he only wishes for what God wills; because it fulfils also, in whatever manner it may be, His fulfilment also.

He also wishes only for that that is good, for he wills only what God wills.

In conclusion, he finds all things good in themselves; for his conformity to the will of God, united as it is to God, makes him possess God; and what benefit can fail to occur to him who possesses God?

LE PÈRE NEPVEU.  
*Reflex. Chrétiennes.*

[JOHN BAPTIST MASSILLON was the son of a notary residing at Hyères in Provence. Born on the 24th of June 1663, he entered the Congregation of the Oratory in the year 1681. His fame as a fine preacher having reached the ears of Louis XIV., he was summoned to Versailles to preach the Advent. It was, after the course of these discourses that he received the following encomium from the lips of the French king :—"My father, I have been well satisfied with many orators, but as for you, every time that I have heard you I have felt very discontented and vexed with myself."

In the year 1717, the Regent nominated him to be the Bishop of Clermont. He remained in the government of his diocese until the year 1742, when he died at the age of seventy-nine.]

Joseph, raised to the highest dignity in the court of Egypt, by his elevation became to be the terror and protector of his brothers. These (of whom he had so much reason to complain) did he not consider them as only executors of the will of God, notwithstanding the outrages they inflicted on him — that the treason and cruelty which they employed against him proved, by the decrees of Divine Providence, to be more beneficial than their jealousy could have imagined?

It is true that they had sold him to go into Egypt, but it was not on account of their perfidy, rather it was by the will of God that he should be sent to this foreign land. *Non vestro consilio sed Dei voluntate hic missus sum.*

Such were the feelings of so many Saints and martyrs with regard to those by whom they had been persecuted.

They revered even the scourges which God had sent to chasten them. The early Christians blessed the hands that struck them.

MASSILLON.

Give us, O Lord, the will to do what Thou commandest, and to do what Thou willest.

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*Confessions.*

#### 4.—On the Word of God.

PÈRE ANTOINE DE LA PORTE (Carmelite),  
MASSILLON, ST. FRANCIS DE SALES and  
ST. CYPRIAN.

“The seed is the word of God.”

—LUKE viii. 11.

ACCORDING to St. Augustine, the Divine Word falls on a weak and sensitive element, and it becomes a sacrament. This word also falls on impure hearts, and it makes them chaste; on the wicked, and makes them saints. It finds them in sin, and it converts them to God.

As in the most wonderful of our Sacraments, those words, *Hoc est Corpus Meum*, are transubstantiations of bread into the Body and of wine into the Blood of the Son of God, because they are not the words of the priest, but the words of Jesus Christ, offered up nevertheless by the priest; so in like manner preachers make use of moral but wondrous transubstantiations, and change old sinners into new servants of God.

What miraculous wonders has not this Word produced! It falls on the heart of an adulterous David, and it makes him a royal penitent. It falls on the heart of a Magdalen; it finds her a worshipper of sin, and it makes her a model of penance. It falls on Matthew, and from a public usurer, it makes him an Evangelist. You see a soul enter the Church—a soul enamoured of the world and full of vanity—it enters into the Church; it pays but little attention to the Word of God, and immediately a penetrating light pierces the heart, which shows the bad state in which it is. From

this knowledge it sees its shame, its baseness; this shame produces the grief for having offended God, and this sorrow brings forth the resolution of a change of life.

What is the reason of this wonder, if it be not the Word of God?

The force and energy of the Word of God is such that one could say that it was all-powerful: *Vox Domini in virtute in magnificentia*. It is found in the nothingness of the ears who have listened to its voice. "It calls those which are not, as well as those which are."

It has subdued the world, overturned idolatry, converted whole nations. It has brought kings, wise men, ministers of state, under the subjection of the Gospel. It has done more than this: throughout the universe the most barbarous and savage of people have been civilised. In short, we owe to this Divine Word the conversion of the whole world and the extirpation of idolatry.

LE PÈRE ANTOINE DE LA PORTE  
(Carmelite).

. . . . .

However enlightened and clever we may be, we must not, on account of that, neglect the assistance of holy instructions; however bright may be our intellect, we can easily go astray; however learned and scientific, we can always learn something from hearing the Word of God. If your understanding learns of nothing new, your heart will, at least, feel that you know nothing, if you do not know Jesus and Him crucified. If you are sinners, what more capable of bringing you to a sense of your own unworthiness than by listening to the voice of the missionary sent by God? If you are good, what sweeter consolation than hearing truths explained, truths you love and practise, and which become more beneficial the oftener you hear them?

Our Lord has given to the preacher of His Word, a help which is not to be found elsewhere. The commonest truths, in the mouth of the preacher, have a strength and unction which can alone move and convert the most hardened heart.

In what disposition do *you* come to hear the Word of God?

Many attend to decide upon the merit or incapacity of him who announces it; many, to make unjust comparisons between this and that preacher. Some glory in being very difficult to please, in order to appear of excellent taste; they, inattentively, listen to simple explanations which are necessary to be touched upon, and all the fruit which they gather from a Christian discourse consists of disparaging remarks and pointing out the defects of the preacher. They come, with an intention of finding fault, and ever find something to censure and criticise.

MASSILLON.  
*Lenten Sermon.*

. . . . .

Listen with devotion to the Word of God, whether you hear it in familiar conversation with your spiritual friends or at a sermon.

Make all the profit of it you possibly can, and suffer it not to fall to the ground, but receive it into your heart as a precious balm, imitating the most holy Virgin, who preserved carefully in her heart all the words which were spoken in praise of her Son.

Remember that our Lord gathers up the words we speak to Him in our prayers, according as we gather up those He speaketh to us by preaching.

Have always at hand some approved book of devotion, such as the spiritual works of St. Bonaventure, of Gerson, of Thomas à Kempis, &c., &c., and read a little in them

every day with as much devotion, as if you were reading a letter from those Saints.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.  
*Devout Life.*

. . . . .

Manna suited everybody's taste; in like manner the Word of God, which is preached to all throughout the world, supplies the wants of all kinds of persons, and according as it is listened to by those of ordinary intelligence it will be found—as did the manna of old—to be suitable to everybody's taste.

ST. CYPRIAN.  
*On the Lord's Prayer.*



## 5.—On the Law of God.

SAINTS AUGUSTINE, CHRYSOSTOM,  
JEROME, and CYPRIAN.

“Do not think that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”—MATTHEW v. 17.

[ST. AUGUSTINE, the perfect model of penitents, was born, A.D. 354, at Agaste, a small town of Numidia, in Africa. Patrick, his father, after having been for many years an idolater, embraced Christianity and received baptism. As to St. Monica, his mother, every one knows that she was a model to all Christian mothers. Through the prayers of his saintly mother, he was converted when he was thirty-two. At the age of forty-two, he was consecrated Bishop of Hippo.

St. Augustine has ever been regarded, and justly, as the most learned of the bishops of his age, and the doctor of all the churches. He expired, tranquilly, on the 28th of August 430, aged seventy-six years, nigh forty of which had been spent in the labours of the apostolic ministry.]

THE difference between the two Testaments may be explained in two words—love and fear. The one appertains to the old man, the other to the new.

This is the principal difference. For the new law is that which God promises to impress upon the mind, to engrave on the heart, and that which is written on in giving us the Holy Ghost, which diffuses the requisite charity to make us love truth and justice.

So that this new law induces us to love all that it commands, while the laws engraven on a stone, only show the obligations of creatures, and threats in default of obedience. It is this difference which the Apostle wished to

point out in his *Épistle* to the Romans, where he says, "We have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption of sons of God." The spirit of bondage is that which creates fear, the spirit of adoption is that of love; fear makes us slaves, love makes us as children. The Jews, who acted only through fear of punishment, were slaves; the Christians, who love, are the true children.

The new law, imprinted on the heart by the Holy Spirit, regulates the interior feelings; whilst the laws engraven on stone can only regulate exterior actions.

Fear is not capable of changing the interior feeling; it can only act outwardly, and thus forces the will to do what it would not do, or even what it might do. So that exteriorly it submits to force, interiorly, it resists. If deeds and words conform to the law, the heart is opposed to it. If the mouth and hands obey, the will is disobedient.

This is the reproach that God makes to the Jews when He says through His prophet, "This people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

The two usual methods adopted to govern mankind are fear and hope. This is why the old law does not solely make use of threats to ensure obedience, but it adds to them promises; but these promises were for temporal welfare, for sensual and gross men who sought for fleeting prosperity.

Thus we read in the 23d chapter of Exodus that Moses, in order to induce them to observe the law he was about to promulgate, promises them every kind of prosperity—health, long life, a numerous progeny, abundance of everything necessary, and protection from enemies, so that they may enjoy in peace and quiet all these blessings.

Now, on the contrary, the Son of God begins by preaching penance, and speaks only of the kingdom of heaven and to make us understand that His wish was that Chris-

tians should despise earthly prosperity, not expecting a reward in this life, He begins His beautiful Sermon on the Mount by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," "Blessed are the meek," "Blessed are they that mourn;" and in St. Luke He says, Woe to you that are rich! woe to you that now laugh! and to all who seek the esteem and approbation of men!

In this life, He leads us to expect sufferings, crosses, and persecution, and He wills that we should love what is unseen and supernatural.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

*Extracts from his Book against Adimante.*

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[ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.— This renowned saint and doctor of the Church, was born in Antioch in the year 344, and died A.D. 407, aged sixty-three.

The name of Chrysostom (which means *golden-mouthed*) was assigned to him after his death, to express the eloquence which he possessed in a much greater degree than the other fathers of the Church. He never repeats himself, and is always original.]

The apostles announced to mankind, a doctrine raised above human intellect; they spoke not of earthly things, but of heaven; they preached a kingdom and state which had never before been understood; they discovered other riches, another poverty, another liberty, another bondage, another life and death—in fact, a change and renewal of everything.

Their teachings are far beyond that of a Plato who had traced out an idea of an absurd republic, or that of a Zenon, or those of other philosophers who had formed projects of governments and republics, and those who wished to be lawgivers.

One need but read their books to see that the devil urged them on and diffused a profound darkness in their mind, upsetting by that means the order of things, and

destroying the most inviolate laws of nature. And notwithstanding that these philosophers were at perfect liberty to publish their strange maxims, fearless of danger or persecution, they deemed it necessary to call to their aid the most elegant of phrases, the most pleasing eloquence, in order to impress their own ideas firmly in their minds.

The Gospel which, on the contrary, preached only for the poor and for all those persecuted sinners throughout the world who had been treated as slaves, and who were exposed to all kinds of danger—this Gospel, I say, has all at once been received with every mark of respect by the learned as well as by the ignorant, by warriors and princes,—in a word, by Greeks and Romans, and by every savage nation.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.  
*Sermon on St. Matthew.*

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[ST. JEROME, one of the most learned and prolific authors of the early Latin Church, was born in Dalmatia about the year 331. The learned epistles which he wrote to St. Marcella and St. Paula are celebrated for their learning and rare monastic piety.

St. Paula accompanied him to Palestine in 386, where he founded a convent at Bethlehem ; near this he remained till his death in 420.

His biblical labours are highly valuable, his Latin version of the Old Testament from the original language is the foundation of the Vulgate, and his commentary gave a new impulse to the study of the Holy Scriptures.]

St. Jerome, in writing to the mother of Paula, says : Begin with the Psalter, and teach your daughter how to chant the Psalms. You can read with her the Proverbs, by which she will know the moral precepts.

This can be followed by Ecclesiasticus, a book so capable of inspiring her with a contempt of this world.

You can then proceed to the Gospels—these, your daughter ought ever to have in hand.

She can then read the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles. These finished, she will gladly learn by heart the Prophets and Historical books.

Lastly, she can read the Canticle of Canticles, for she will have been prepared to understand this in a spiritual sense.

ST. JEROME.

. . . . .

The evangelical precepts are no other than divine lessons, they are the foundation of hope, the strengthening of faith, the food of charity; the Gospel is a rudder to steer our way through life, and helps us to reach the harbour of salvation.

The law commands but few things, but those few should be willingly and lovingly performed.

ST. CYPRIAN.  
*On the Lord's Prayer.*

## 6.—On the Presence of God.

PÈRE NEPVEU and FATHER FABER.

“The sinner hath provoked the Lord—God is not before his eyes.”

—PSALM x.

*God sees me.* Ah, what a phrase is this for him who understands it well! How capable it is to control our passions, to moderate our desires, to prevent us from sinning, to sustain our courage, to animate our fervour, to regulate our conduct!

*God sees me.* He is ever present, always mindful of me, thinks ever of me; whereas I heed Him not, I am not attentive to Him, I never think of Him. Oh! shame, shame!

*God sees me.* With what respect and modesty ought I not to behave in His presence! The seraphim hide their faces with their wings, and I, a mere worm of the earth, do not tremble.

*God sees me.* Shall I dare, in the presence of Thy glance so infinitely pure, commit deeds which I dare not even show to man? Shall I dare to sin in Thy presence, knowing that sin and the sinner is hated by Thee, and to condemn the sinner Thou hast no wish?

*God sees me.* He penetrates into the innermost recesses of my heart; He sees therein every desire, and discerns every intention. With what purity of intention then ought I not to perform every action.

God is present not only by the immensity of His being,

but in a more efficacious manner. He is with me to help me, to support me, to act with me, to work with me. I can do nothing without Him, but also I can do everything with Him. I cannot make the least movement, conceive the least desire, do the smallest action, unless He lends me His help and assistance, even when I would wish to offend Him. What condescension! Why ought I to abuse it? But He always accommodates Himself to my inclinations; He subjects Himself to my will. Is it not reasonable that I should subject my will to His? He concurs always with me. Is it not right and just that I should act in concert with Him?

Not only does God act within me, but He also acts with every creature for me. It is for me that He gives light and warmth to the sun, that He refreshes me with the breeze, that He cheers me with the fire; should I not be unjust if I did not make use of these creations for His glory alone? Should I not be ungrateful if I basely converted such blessings into opportunities of sinning against Him who created them for me?

LE PÈRE NEPVEU.  
*Christian Reflections.*

. . . . .

We do our works in the presence of God, when we practise the presence of God while we do them. There are six ways of practising the presence of God which are given in books, and from which souls should select those which are most suited to them, but not try to practise more than one.

The first, is to try to realise God as He is in heaven; the second, to regard ourselves in Him as in His immensity; the third, is to look at each creature as if it were a sacrament having God hidden under it; the fourth, is to think of Him, and see Him by pure faith; the fifth, is to look at Him as in ourselves rather than outside of us, though He is both; and the sixth, is to gravitate towards

Him by an habitual loving-mindfulness of heart, a kind of instinct which is no uncommon growth of prayer, and comes sooner than would be expected when men strive to serve God out of the single motive of holy love.

For the perfection of our ordinary actions, we should do them in the sight of Jesus, that is, to use the words of the missal, by Christ, with Christ, and in Christ. To do our actions by Christ, is to do them in dependence upon Him, as He did everything in dependence on His Father, and by the movement of His Spirit. To do our actions with Christ is to practise the same virtues as our Lord, to clothe ourselves with the same dispositions, and to act from the same intentions, all according to the measure of the lowliness of our possibilities. To do our actions in Christ is to unite ours with His, and to offer them to God along with His, so that for the sake of His, they may be accepted on high.

FATHER FABER.  
*Growth in Holiness.*

. . . . .

*Theological Definition of the Presence of God.*

When one speaks of the presence of God, there are two ways of looking upon it. The first, is that God is present to us, that is to say, that we think of Him, and that, in the eyes of faith, we look upon His Divine Being as intimately present in the place in which we are. The second, is that we are present to God, that is to say, that He sees us, and is always looking upon us, so that nothing escapes His observation—words, deeds, thoughts, desires, and intentions—and that wherever we may be, we may always have Him for a spectator, witness, and judge of all that we do. That should we act well or ill, such actions are always in His presence and before His eyes.



## 7.—On the Providence of God.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM, PÈRE CROISSET, S.J., and  
ST. AUGUSTINE.

"For all Thy ways are prepared, and in Thy Providence Thou hast placed Thy judgments."—JUDITH ix. 5.

LET us place our trust in the Providence of God. Let us cut off all those anxieties which serve only to torture our minds uselessly, since, whether we make ourselves uneasy or not, it is God alone who sends us all these things, and who may increase them until He sees they disturb us less.

Of what use would all our cares, anxieties, and troubles be to us if they only served to torment us, and made us suffer the pain of having had them?

Our cares are only the cares of an individual, those of God include the whole world. The more we trouble ourselves with our own interests, the less will God interfere.

He who is invited to a splendid banquet does not trouble himself about what he shall eat, and he who goes to a limpid spring does not make himself uneasy, for he knows he will be able to appease his thirst.

Since, then, we have the Providence of God, which is richer than the most magnificent feast and more inexhaustible than the purest spring, do not be uneasy—do not cherish any misgivings.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.  
*Taken from his Homilies on St. Matthew.*

[LE PÈRE CROISSET, S.J., was born at Marseilles, about the middle of the seventeenth century. His "Exercises of Piety," and his other religious works, are sufficient to prove that he was one of the great masters of the spiritual life.]

Why fear? says St. Augustine; you have a God for a protector and His Providence for a guide.

What! says the holy doctor, you fear to perish under the guidance of God, and under the protection of His Providence? *Times ergo ne pereas?* Is it that you know not that not a single hair can fall off without His approval? *Cujus capillus non peribit.* Ah! if He takes so much care of things that are of little or no consequence, how safe ought we not to feel when we know with what care He watches a soul which is so precious to Him?

I am under the protection of the Lord, says the prophet; there is nothing He will not fail to supply me with. It is true that I am poor and am destitute of everything, but the Lord takes care of me, and He has undertaken to provide for my wants; nothing can happen to me—sin excepted—without His concurrence. What have I to fear?

What a host of consoling reflections cannot we not find in the Divine Providence over His creatures! How sweet to think with what wisdom our Lord disposes of everything for His glory and our salvation! The cunning and malice of an enemy, the ill-will of an envious man, a hundred accidents of this life, all end advantageously to those who love their God.

It is true that we are but exiles and travellers in this fleeting world, that we therein journey through difficult and dangerous paths, but what does God not do—yes, and daily too—to prevent His servants from straying or from perishing? He not only is their guide and protector, but He showers down His graces, and even makes use of His angels to help them. He warns them, by secret inspira-

tions, what they should do and what they should not do, so that one would say that God is solely occupied in caring for His creatures.

The world ignores all these loving contrivances of Divine Providence. The wordlings judge of the different accidents which occur to well-to-do people, in the same way they passed their judgment on the adversities of Joseph, but they did not see the resources of Divine Providence which made everything turn to the advantage of His elect—according to the words of the Apostle, *Diligentibus Deum, omnia co-operantur in bonum*.

Let all the world rise up in arms against the servants of God, what have they to fear when under the protection of their Divine Master? The malice of men cannot hurt them.

Let them employ all possible cunning to disquiet them, let them use every kind of cruel torture to destroy their bodies, even let all hell be unloosed against them, what have they to dread, if God is for them?

LE PÈRE CROISET.  
*Exercises of Piety.*

. . . . .

He who has given us life will give us wherewith to sustain it. He who feeds the thief, will He not feed the innocent? And if He takes care of His enemies, what will He not do for His friends? You cannot place yourself into better hands than He who made you what you are. He who has been so good to you before you were what you are, can He leave you uncared for, now that you are what He would wish you to be?

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*On Psalm vi. and xxxviii.*

## 8.—On the Service of God.

HENRI MARIE BOUDON and FATHER FABER.

"My yoke is sweet, and my burden light."

—MATTHEW xi. 30.

[HENRI MARIE BOUDON, Archdeacon of Evreux, was born in 1624, and died in the year 1702. This holy servant of God was the author of many pious works. The seventh volume of the Library of Religious Biography, edited by Edward Healy Thompson, contains an excellent biography of this distinguished ecclesiastic.]

WHAT an honour, and how glorious it is to be in the service of so great, so good a Master !

The condition of the least of His servants is incomparably greater than that of the kings of the earth ; for their greatness and prosperity finish with their lives, but the servants of God finish with their lives the pains and trials they have had to suffer in His service, and after that they find an eternal happiness and immortal crowns awaiting them.

It is then reasonable what the royal prophet assures us, that one day spent in His house and in His service, is better than a thousand days spent elsewhere.

It is true that all men esteem and love to be great, but they do not think wherein true greatness is. They deem it to be a great honour to be in the service of royalty ; they pay heavy sums to be deemed the head of a firm ; but they take but little pains to be a servant of God, and, what is more grievous, they often blush at the idea of fulfilling the duties of His service.

The great Apostle was elated at a time when the Chris-

tians were looked upon as scavengers of the world, *Tanquam purgamenta hujus mundi*; and we often are confused when called upon to practise the duties of His service, and this, too, at the time when the Christian religion is dominant, and when many powerful monarchs have willingly professed it.

Happy are the Christians who feel the honour and acknowledge the grace which God has bestowed upon them when He has received them as His servants! Oh! what a good Master we have! how magnificent are His promises! how faithful He is to carry them out! how liberal are His rewards!

How happy is he who serves Him! and thrice happy is the choice he has made! Oh! if all men knew what it was to be a servant of God, they would have no more ardent wish or aspire to a higher honour than to be reckoned among the number of His faithful servants.

O my Lord and my God! my heart is filled with bitter grief when I call to mind the years of my past life. Alas! far from having employed them in Thy service, I am one of those unfaithful servants who have had my own self-interest in view.

However, as You are my Lord and King, I this day take an oath of allegiance, and from henceforth, swear that my wish is to live and die in Thy service.

BOUDON.

*Le Chrétien Inconnu.*

. . . . .

The service of God is not only our most important, but our sole work. This is so obvious that it requires only to be stated. Time and words would alike be wasted in the attempt to prove it. Yet, alas! even spiritual persons need to be reminded of this elementary truth. Let us subject ourselves to a brief examination upon it. Are we

thoroughly convinced it is true? Has our past life shown proof of it? Is our present life modelled upon it? Are we taking pains that our future life shall be so?

What is the result when we compare our worldly promptitude and industry with our preference of the service of God over all other things? Are we in any way on the look out for His greater glory, or our own greater union with Him? Is it plain at first sight that we have no object or pursuit so engrossing and so decidedly paramount as the service of God?

The spirit in which we serve Him should be entirely without reserve. Need I prove this? What is to be reserved? Can there be reserves with God? Can His sovereignty be limited, or our love of Him ever reach the measure of enough? But have no reserve with Him now? Is there really no corner of our heart over which He is not absolute Lord? Does He ask of us freely what He wills, and do we do our best to give Him all He asks? Have we no implicit condition with Him that He is only so far with us and no further? Is our outward life utterly and unconditionally dependent on Him? And if it is, is the kingdom of our inward intentions reposing peaceably beneath His unquestioned sceptre?

It is of importance not to allow ourselves to rest in any pursuit except the service of God. By resting I mean feeling at home, reposing on what we do, forgetting it is a mere means even when we do not err so far as to mistake it for an end, being contented with what we are, not pushing on, nor being conscious that we are fighting a battle and climbing a hill. Nothing can excuse the neglect of the duties of the position in life which God has conferred upon us. All is delusive where these are not attended to and made much of. They are as it were private sacraments to each one of us. They are our chief, often our sole, way of becoming saints.

But while we perform them with all the peaceful diligence which the presence of God inspires, we must jealously realise that they are means, not ends, subordinate and subservient to the great work of our souls. No amount of external work, not the unsleeping universal heroism of a St. Vincent de Paul, can make up for the want of attention to our own souls, such as resting in our external work would imply.

Hence we should be jealous of any great pleasure in our pursuits, even when they are works of Christian mercy and love. It is always a pleasure to do good, yet it must be watched, moderated, and kept in check, or it will do us a mischief before we are aware. The thought of eternity is a good help to this. It brings down the pride of external work, and takes the brightness and colour out of our successes; and this is well, for such brightness and colour are nothing more than the reflection of ourselves and our own activity.

FATHER FABER.  
*Growth in Holiness.*

## 9.—On the want of fervour in the Service of God.

BOURDALOUE, FATHER CROISSET, and  
ST. AUGUSTINE.

“Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.”—APOCALYPSE iii. 16

[BOURDALOUE, LOUIS.—Louis Bourdaloue was born at Bourges in 1682, and died on the 13th of May 1704.

During the reign of Louis XIV. of France many celebrated ecclesiastics attained celebrity and even an European reputation, but Bourdaloue equalled, if not excelled, all those who have succeeded him. He was styled as “The King of Preachers and the Preacher of Kings.”

His sermons and different works were collected and published in 17 vols. 8vo in the year 1826. In his magnificent discourses no one displayed a deeper insight into the divine mysteries. Addressing himself less to worldlings than to Christians, he united the charity of St. Paul to the unction and learning of St. Augustine, and the use he makes of passages from Holy Scripture and the quotations from the writings of the holy fathers render the reading of his sermons profitable, and at the same time interesting.

The eulogy of Bourdaloue from Cardinal Maury’s *Essai sur l’Eloquence* is always quoted in all French elegant extracts.]

WE begin at once to go back in the spiritual life when we become lukewarm or lax in the service of God. It is the first step that leads to sin and death. To languish, says St. Bernard—not that languor of love like unto that of the Spouse of the Canticle, not that languor of dryness which David felt when God withdrew His consolations and seemed to leave him to himself, and which made him say, *Languerunt oculi mei præ inopiam*; but that lukewarm-



ness which is criminal and voluntary, that languor which is our own doing, and, through cowardice, makes us throw off the yoke of Christian regularity—induces us to neglect the ordinary exercises of piety and prayer, causes us to feel a distaste for penance, so much so that we withdraw from the Sacraments, cease from performing good works—in short, makes us feel that religion is so wearisome that we can no longer serve the Lord our God in spirit and truth.

This is what St. Bernard means when he depicts spiritual tepidity ; and God wills that we should reflect on our past tepidity and attend to what His saints teach us.

The state of lukewarmness is hurtful to every one, inas-much as it is one of those maladies of the soul to cure which the strongest remedies are often found to be ineffectual.

Such a state is also in direct opposition to the grace of penance, because, in lieu of that holy fear which it ought to excite within us, it substitutes fruitless fears which result in nothing.

We must try to check the growth of tepidity by thinking of the holiest Christian duties, and fortify our will by prayer and watchfulness.

In lesser attacks of lukewarmness which are not actually criminal, far from lessening our devotions, we should, on the contrary, try to be more fervent, more regular in our exercises of piety.

To succeed in this it is preferable to practise solid devotion, to encourage the most generous piety, because it often happens that he who serves God with less sensible devotion serves Him with more merit and perfection.

This lukewarmness does not come upon us suddenly. Like unto the foolish virgins mentioned in the Gospel, it changes from a drowsiness to a deep slumber. *Dormita-verunt omnes et dormierunt.*

An indifference about our salvation, a contempt for little duties, a falling off from all that is good and hopeful, a complacency in all that is bad—all these stupify the soul, and reduce it to that state of Jonas, who slept soundly during the violent storm, when all those who were in the ship were sore afraid, and yet he remained, as it were, in a lethargic sleep.

It is in vain for a confessor to advise, vain for the preacher to exhort. If lukewarmness be accompanied with culpable negligence, the sinner will rarely, if ever, be awakened to a sense of his or her danger.

This is a true picture of very many who add to their indifference, the torpidity of an obstinate negligence ; those who do not wish to fall into open sin, but take no trouble to advance in virtue ; who, although absolved from past sins, still remain in a guilty negligence of their everyday duties ; who do not deny the truths of our holy faith, but, in listening to exhortations, pay no attention or heed them not ; who, under the pretence that they are not so bad as many others, never wish or try to imitate those who are fervent.

In conclusion, it is to such as these, that the Holy Spirit alludes when He pronounces the curse on those who do the work of the Lord negligently. *Maledictus qui facit opus Dei negligenter.*

BOURDALOUE.

*Passion.*

. . . . .

The earnestness, the zeal, the love of Mary Magdalen, compelled our Saviour to console her. She knew Him by His voice. Oh, my God ! What were at that moment, the transports of love, the tender gratitude of that holy soul !

Those who are lukewarm in the service of God cannot realise this, because they love so little, and consequently

cannot know how much she loved Him. Such as these would wish to be all for Jesus, but they wish it if God will be satisfied with a divided love—if God would accept of a service of their own, and not the one He desires.

They would like to be perfect, but only in their own imperfect way; they wish to rely on human prudence, and if anything overtax their strength, they lose courage and are frightened at the least difficulty.

Vain are the desires, frivolous are the pretexts, of a heart steeped in tepidity.

FATHER CROISSET.

. . . . .

Howsoever long you may have lived, howsoever persevering you have been in doing well, oh! do not say, "It is enough, I am all right now;" for this would be as much as to say, "It is sufficient, I will now begin to slacken and fall off."

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*On Psalm lxix.*

## 10.—On the Mercy of God.

FATHER FABER and  
FATHER CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.

"How great is the mercy of the Lord, and His forgiveness to them that turn to Him."—ECCLES. xvii. 28.

MERCY is the tranquillity of God's omnipotence and the sweetness of His omnipresence, the fruit of His eternity and the companion of His immensity, the chief satisfaction of His justice, the triumph of His wisdom, and the patient perseverance of His love.

Wherever we go there is mercy, the peaceful, active, endless mercy of our Heavenly Father. If we work by day, we work in mercy's light; and we sleep at night in the lap of our Father's mercy.

The courts of heaven gleam with its outpoured prolific beauty. Earth is covered with it, as the waters cover the bed of the stormy sea. Purgatory is, as it were, its own separate creation, and is lighted by its gentle moonlight, gleaming there soft and silvery, through night and day.

His mercy is simply infinite, for mercy is one of His perfections, while His love is the harmony of all.

Mercy does not tire of us, does not despair of us, does not give over its pursuit of us, takes no offence, repays evil with good, and is the ubiquitous minister of the precious Blood of Jesus. But love seems more than this. Love fixes upon each of us, individualises us, is something personal; but mercy is something by itself.

Love is the perfection of the uncreated in Himself. Mercy is the character of the Creator.

Mercy pities, spares, makes allowances, condescends; and yet if mercy is not the reason of God's love, where else shall we find it in His infinity?

FATHER FABER (Orat.)  
*Creator and Creature.*

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[COLOMBIÈRE, CLAUDE DE LA.—This learned and saintly Jesuit was born in the year 1641, and yielded up his soul to God at the early age of forty-one, at Paray le Monial. After a two years' sojourn at the court of James II. God led him to Paray, to the school of the Sacred Heart, that he might discover its treasures and make known their value. "It was distinctly told me," writes the blessed Margaret Mary, "that this great servant of God had been partly designed for the execution of this grand design."]

God so pardons our sins, that He blots out even the remembrance of the greatest outrage. God does not act as men do. He does not grant half a pardon.

When any one has betrayed our trust, or has mortally offended us—howsoever we may wish to become reconciled to the offender, or may cherish an earnest desire to forgive, and strive in our heart to do so—nevertheless we find it difficult to place the same confidence in him, or to treat him with the same affection as before; for there remains in the corner of our heart a tinge of bitterness from time to time, or when we call to mind what he has done to us.

Our merciful Lord is not subject to this weakness.

Oh! would that all sinners who sincerely repent of their past offences could see in His heart the feelings He has for them;—no resentment, no bitterness there! and how thoroughly He forgives them.

God does not stop there. Not content with forgetting our trespasses, He gives us back the merit of those good

deeds which we had lost by losing His grace; He restores to us those merits and that grace with interest, and He places us in a position more advantageous than that in which we were when we fell away from Him.

I am not at all astonished that St. Mary Magdalen had not, even after thirty years had elapsed, ceased to weep for her sins, although she could not doubt but they had been remitted. I am not surprised that St. Peter should have been inconsolable even unto death for having failed in his fidelity to so good a Master, notwithstanding the certainty he had of being forgiven.

Can one be mindful that so good a Master has been offended without having one's heart torn with grief, and without feeling a hatred of one's self? Can we, who have so coolly insulted Him without any reason, having, on the contrary, a thousand reasons to love Him, we, who have for so long a time abused His love, His patience, His blessings, His mercy, can we, I say, recollect this without dying of regret and repentance?

It is that thought which redoubles my grief, at having so cruelly sinned against a God who has so readily forgiven me, who has returned good for evil, and all kinds of blessings in return for every kind of evil.

Can it be that I shall ever forget the ingratitude which He has so soon forgotten? that I should forgive my own infidelities, which He not only has pardoned but has urged me to accept His forgiveness many a time? in fine, that I should remain satisfied after having insulted His divine goodness so often and for so long a time, a God who does not love me less to-day, and who loves me even more now than before I had offended Him?

LE PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.  
*Reflections.*

## 11.—On the Mercy of God as manifested in our Illnesses.

FATHER SPINOLA, PÈRE NOUET, and  
ST. AMBROSE.

“My son, in thy sickness forget not thyself, but pray to the Lord, and He shall heal thee.”—ECCLES. xxxviii. 9.

[FATHER SPINOLA, saint and martyr, was one of the band of missionaries who suffered martyrdom in Japan on the 2d of September 1622. Urban VIII. placed these martyrs on the list of Saints, and our Holy Mother the Church celebrates their triumph on February 5.

Father Spinola, a noble Genoese, entered the order of the Society of Jesus at Nole at the time when his uncle, Cardinal Spinola, was Bishop of that diocese. So ardent was his desire to shed his blood for the faith of his Divine Master, that he entreated to be allowed to join the band of missionaries who were ready to go to Japan. To his joy, his request was granted, and he, in company with Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans, reached Japan in 1602.

They, with an indefatigable zeal, worked for the salvation of souls and converted a large number of heathens. The Japanese authorities sent Father Spinola and others to a miserable dungeon, and it was during his incarceration, that Father Spinola managed to send the following letter to one of his relatives in Europe.

In the year 1622 the saintly Father was condemned to be burned alive. When the cords which attached his poor weak frame to the stake, were consumed, he fell on the burning embers, and his soul, now free from its prison-house of flesh, flew up to heaven surrounded by the flames of divine love.

How sweet to suffer for Jesus Christ! I cannot find words energetic enough to tell you what I feel, more especially since I have been confined in prison, where we are

forced to observe a continual fast. The strength of my body has left me, but the joy of my heart increases in proportion to the prospect of a speedy death.

What a happiness it will be if I am permitted to sing next Easter Sunday the *Hæc dies* in heaven!

Had you tasted the sweet delight which God has poured into our souls, you would indeed despise the good things this world affords. Since I have been in prison for His sake, I feel that I am a disciple of Jesus. I now find myself fully compensated for the pangs of hunger, by the consoling sweetness which filled my soul; and were I to be immured in prison for years, the time would appear to me to be short, so much do I desire to suffer for Him who rewards me so liberally for my pains.

Among other illnesses, I have had a fever raging within me which lasted a hundred days, without the possibility of being relieved. During all this time my joy has been so great, that I find it useless to describe it in words.

FATHER SPINOLA.

. . . . .

When we are in good health there are two things which usually go far to stifle every sense of the fear of God, and these are the hope of a long life and the forgetfulness of eternity.

So long as the sinner is strong and well, the thought of death never enters into his mind; or, if it should, it makes but little impression upon him, because he looks upon it as an event very far off.

Then comes the judgment (which awaits until that fearful moment), and even the thought of this does not affect him, for he lives as if he never had to give an account of his misdeeds; but when he finds himself stretched on a bed of sickness, weak, languid, exhausted with pain and overcome with grief, it is then that he recollects that he is



mortal; and, seeing himself so near that fearful passage which he had not before thought of, he cannot but be much alarmed at finding that he is compelled to ponder on the danger he is in, and of the necessity of preparing for the salvation of his soul.

This, then, is the short road by which the Divine Mercy leads worldlings and draws them back to His service.

That libertine would have gone on carelessly for ten years more, had not God in His mercy sent him a malignant fever, which has frightened him and made him return to his duty.

Doctors are accustomed to wound one part of the body in order to cure another part; they open a vein in a sound arm to relieve a feverish brain; they make use of the cupping-glass to remove inflammation; they keep a wound open in order to be able to close another; and, as St. Jerome says, the secret of their science consists in restoring health through pain. *Ars medicorum est, per dolore, reddere sanitatem.*

The Son of God, who is the Physician of souls, follows the same method to cure sinners. He smites the flesh to cure the mind, and from illnesses, which are the forerunners of the death of the body, He frames a good provision for the life of the soul.

All the holy Fathers teach us that illness is the school of Christian wisdom, the dawning of virtue whereby the mind is invigorated, and the grand means of grace, which redoubles its strength, through the weakness of the body. When I am weak, says St. Paul, it is then that I am strong. I am never more vigorous in mind than when my body is exhausted with illness and wearied with weakness. More than this, illness may be said to be victorious over vice, through the triumph of grace over the passions of the soul, and a triumph of the soul over the appetites of the flesh.

It is then that the sensualist thinks more of his health than of his pleasures; it is then that the miser dreams not of his riches, but sighs for the treasure of health; then that the ambitious man throws aside his vanity and builds no more castles in the air. The gormandiser sobers down at the sight of death, the envious and vindictive proclaim a truce; for the pains of the body soften the bitterness of the mind.

Is it not, then, a wonderful blessing that Almighty God should allow the infirmities of the body to arrest the impetuosity of our passions?

REV. PÈRE NOUET, S.J.

*Meditations.*

. . . . .

That illness has been your salvation. You have suffered, but your life has not been in danger. This is what the Lord has said, "I will strike him, and I will cure him."

He has struck you, your illness has awakened your faith, and that has been your cure.

ST. AMBROSE.

*From his Epistles.*

## 12.—On the Mercy of God as Displayed in our Afflictions and Tribulations.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM and BISHOP FLECHIER.

"Tribulation worketh patience ; and patience trial, and trial hope."

—ROMANS v. 4.

JESUS CHRIST has forewarned us that we should be persecuted in this world. St. Paul, in like manner, says that all they who wish to dwell in Christ will suffer great afflictions, not only through the agency of man, but through the instrumentality of the devil and his angels.

Job emphatically says that the whole of our life here below, is one chain of temptations ?

Why then should we be so sensitive of tribulations, if such be the period fixed for all kinds of afflictions ?

You would indeed have just cause to groan if you had passed through a life of pleasure and sensual delight—a time which our Saviour has allotted for troubles, vexations, and mortifications.

If you are inactive, or apt to pine, buckle on your armour and fight courageously ; if you walk on the broad path when the narrow way is recommended, what will your lot be ? what fearful thoughts will be in store for you !

Quote, I entreat you, a single instance of a person who, after leading a cowardly indifferent life, has participated in the reward God has promised to His elect.

We must always keep in mind that our Saviour warns

us that the gate of heaven is small, that the road which leads to it is narrow, and that few can find it.

It is evident, therefore, that no one need go astray if he but follow the right path.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

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[FLECHIER, ESPRIT, Bishop of Nîmes, and Sacred Orator, was born on the 10th of June 1632, at Perues. He enjoyed a considerable share in the patronage which Louis XIV. extended to all men of letters. He died at Montpellier, on February 16, 1710, aged 78, regretted by all who resided in his diocese. His funeral orations are models of eloquence.]

To cure the blindness which almost always accompanies prosperity, the surest remedy is to be found as in the case of Tobias' gall of the fish, that is to say, in afflictions and chastisements.

When a violent fever will, as it were, liquefy your bones ; when you lie on your bed prostrate and full of grievous pain, you will then see that body for which you have so often risked your soul, which you have clothed with so much luxury, that you have pampered with so many delicacies, is but a fragile vessel which the slightest accident might shatter, and which, of itself, may be broken.

When a preconcerted calumny or any underhand conspiracy will cause you to fall from a position to which you ambitiously aspired, and which position you may have kept up by intrigue, you will at last be convinced of the nothingness and instability of human greatness.

When age or some unforeseen calamity will efface that beauty which attracted many admirers, and which in your heart you wished to preserve, you would be forced to confess that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

When sent adrift by a capricious master, or betrayed by a cowardly false friend, you will naturally feel contempt

for those from whom you expected protection and assistance, and you will then know that one must not trust to human support ; but if you wish never to be deceived, you must place all your confidence in God alone.

Losses and disgrace may be (and often are, thanks be to God) the means and cause of our conversion. They excite us to do penance, and make us feel how just is God, and that afflictions are the best victims we can offer to appease Him. They try us when we feel a natural repugnance to them ; they sanctify us if we accept with humble submission both evils and remedies together ; we suffer troubles, and acquire merit by our patience ; occasions of conflict and victory—suffering and longanimity—knowledge and practice, go hand in hand together. They are the merciful means of softening our stony hearts, and whoever resists or is insensible to the chastisements which God sends for his instruction and conversion, his mind and will will be enveloped in impenetrable darkness. I tremble if I dare to say so—I tremble for his salvation.

FLECHIER.

### 13.—On the Grace of God.

ST. ÆLRED, MASSILLON, and BOURDALOUE.

"We do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain."

—2 CORINTHIANS VI. 1.

[ST. ÆLRED.—This great saint was born in the year 1169, in the north of England. Descended from a noble family, and having received an excellent education, he soon obtained a valuable appointment in the court of David I., king of Scotland. The seeds of virtue having been planted within him by a pious mother, he was enabled to battle against the corruptions of the world; and even before he determined to withdraw himself from the temptations of a courtier's life, he ever preserved that favourite virtue of our Saviour's, namely, humility. In addition to this, he possessed an unalterable meekness, which, according to the Gospel, is inseparable from humility.]

In order to detach himself from the world, he quitted Scotland and went to Rieval, in the county of York. Here he entered the Cistercian order, and placed himself under the guidance of William, a disciple of the glorious St. Bernard.

In 1142, he was elected Abbot of Revesby, in the county of Lincoln. He died in the year 1166, aged 57, having been abbot for the space of twenty-two years. Benedict XIV., in approving of the martyrology of the Cistercian order, calls attention to the learning, innocence, and humility of St. Ælred. The same Pope adds, that God crowned the virtues of His servant, with the gifts of prophecy and miracles.]

ST. ÆLRED describes the state of his soul before he resolved to leave the world, its pomps, and vanities. In the *Life of the Saint* by Godescard, the saint says:—

Those who looked only at the external grandeur which

surrounded me—those who judged of my position in the world—knew not what was passing within me, and yet they cried out, Oh, how envious is the lot of that man! how happy he must be!

But they did not see my dejection of mind; they did not know of the insupportable anguish of a heart weighed down by sin.

It was then, O my God, that I knew of the unutterable joy I felt when I found myself supported by Thy grace, and that I tasted of that peace which is now my inseparable companion.

. . . . .

The operations of grace in the conversion of a sinner are not always the same.

At one time it is a sharp and piercing ray, which, darting from the bosom of the Eternal Father, enlightens, strikes, humbles, and overcomes those upon whom it descends; at another time, it is a more subdued brightness, which has its progression and succession, which seems to battle for victory over the dark clouds which it wishes to disperse, and after a thousand attacks, succeeded by as many repulses, it remains for some time doubtful which shall carry off the palm.

Now, it is a powerful God who overthrows the cedars of Lebanon; then it is the God most patient, who wrestles with His servant Jacob, and holds him fast in order to make him enter the right path wherein He invites him.

It is thus, O my God! that You act as the instructor, the master of all hearts.

First proof of grace: To conquer a guilty and rebellious soul, which alone would prevent its conversion, God even makes use of its guilty passion. He seeks to excite it in those very places in which the sinner sought for pleasure and amusement. Saul in his fury runs to Damascus in order

to persecute the Church, and on his road he is struck to the ground and becomes an apostle. The centurion rides up to Mount Calvary to complete the barbarous outrages of the executioners of Jesus Christ, and a ray of light descends upon him, and he confesses that He was truly the Son of God.

A soul experiences trouble and remorse in the very places wherein it vainly sought for pleasure and satisfaction.

Grace awaits, so to speak, at the gates of sin and crime; and disgust, perfidy, bitterness of soul, disgrace, and other frightful consequences, are the punishments of the mercy of God, and the sinner often finds treasures of justice in the very place where he sought for his eternal loss.

Grace triumphs, when it wishes, over the greatest obstacles, because that heavenly unction changes at will our troubles into consolations, so that by means of this grace that which was our delight, and which was to us a deadly poison, becomes a hidden manna, which feeds and strengthens us.

The Holy Spirit of God can, if He will, change the weakest of men into one so strong and powerful that nought can make him swerve from his fidelity, no danger can shake his firmness, no seductive pleasure can corrupt him; in one word it is this, that grace, far stronger than nature, surmounts every obstacle, and attracts all hearts gently and sweetly which He wishes to convert.

MASSILLON.

. . . . .

Grace is, *par excellence*, the gift of God. It is this that infinitely surpasses every gift of nature; it is the only source of our happiness, without which we can do nothing, and with which, we can do everything.

It is this gift which comes from on high, and flows direct from the Father of Light; which converts us, and makes



us new men ; it is that gift by which we are as we are, if, however, we are something before God, as the Apostle says, " By the grace of God I am what I am."

Yet, nevertheless (so strange it is), it is this same gift which, through our stubborn ignorance, we know not of, and which, through our unbearable ingratitude, we receive every day in vain.

Alas ! of what use is it to acknowledge its greatness and merit if we abuse it nearly every moment of our life.

It is for that, that our Saviour, speaking to the Samaritan woman, chided her ignorance by saying, " Ah ! woman, if you had known the nature and excellence of the gift of God."

Grace triumphant must, so to speak, be subject to us. Be not shocked at this term, for it derogates nothing from the dignity of grace. It must be so subject to us as to well-nigh weary the patience of God, who waits for us for years without interfering with our free-will. It selects the place and time ; it seizes the most favourable opportunity to win us ; it is the first to warn us, and, far from taking something away from us by force or violence, it entreats us with prayers and mild remonstrances, it accommodates itself to our weaknesses, adjusts itself to our humour, and if at last it makes us realise the blessings of heaven and the contempt for earthly joys, it is only after having convinced us by innumerable trials of the solidity of the one and the frailty of the other.

BOURDALOUE.  
*On the Samaritan Woman.*

## 14.—On the Sanctifying Grace of God.

CARDINAL BELLARMIN, PÈRE DUNEAU, and ST. LEO.

"Where sin abounded, grace did more abound. That as sin hath reigned to death, so also grace might reign by justice unto life everlasting."—ROMANS v. 20.

[CARDINAL BELLARMIN was born at Monte Pulciano in 1542. At the age of eighteen he entered as novice of the Society of Jesus.

Clement VIII. raised him to the rank of cardinal in the year 1601.

Paul V. wishing to retain him near him, the cardinal resigned his archbishopric and devoted himself to the Court of Rome until the year 1621. He died the same year at the novitiate of the Jesuits, whither he had retired from the commencement of his serious illness.

This learned cardinal has enriched the Church with several works.]

GOD, when He created man, gave him a free-will, and this in so perfect a way that, without constraint, without impairing his liberty, He rules him by His power, frightens him by His threats, and wins him by His blessings.

He has an earnest wish for the salvation of all, but He waits for their consent, for their co-operation. It is to gain them that He warns, that He encourages them, that He leads them on in so wonderful a manner, so as to bring them, with His assistance, to that happiness which is their destiny.

These are the inventions of His wisdom, which the prophet Isaiah says that he will announce to the people (*Isaiah* xii.)

For those who are reprobates, at one time He warns them with mildness, at another time He encourages them

with kindness, and at another He corrects them with a paternal love, according to the disposition in which they are, and according to their necessities.

This loving conduct is a visible excess of the charity of our Lord, not only towards the good, but even towards the wicked, in order that they may be converted and become good.

All that contributes to our justification is an effect of His divine grace. It is that which accompanies this great work, which teaches us by exhortation, which encourages us by example, which terrifies us by chastisement, which moves us by miracles, which enlightens our mind, which induces us to follow wise counsels, which improves our understanding, and which inspires us with feelings conformable to the faith which we profess.

Thus our will is subservient to grace, and acts only conjointly with it; so that all these helps which God gives us require our co-operation, in order that we may begin to carry out the good resolutions which we have received from His divine inspirations. So, if we should fall into some sinful habit, we can only impute our fall to our own pusillanimity; and if we advance in virtue, we can only attribute our advancement to grace.

The help of grace is given to all in a thousand ways, be they secret or be they manifest. If many reject it, it is always their own fault; if some profit by it, it is the united effect of divine grace and the human will.

CARDINAL BELLARMIN.  
*Opuscles.*

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[L'ABBÉ FRANÇOIS DUNEAU was born in Rome in April 1752. His father was a follower of the Pretender. The son at first followed the profession of barrister-at-law; but afterwards took orders, and was one of the early members of the Académie Catholique, established in 1800.

In 1806 the Grand Duke Ferdinand III. engaged this learned ecclesiastic to educate his son, but he did not long enjoy his deserved promotion, for he died on the 4th of October 1811, aged fifty-nine. His discourses, called "*Discorsi Apologetici*," consisting of four volumes, are well known and appreciated.]

Some holy Fathers, in speaking of that passage, "And God created man according to His own image and likeness," say that man has two kinds of resemblance to God—the first, signified by the name of image, consists in that man by nature is endowed with an understanding and a will like unto God, capable of knowing Him and of loving Him; the second, expressed by the name of likeness, consists in that man was created in the grace of God, and this gives him a perfect resemblance to His Creator, which he had not in his natural being.

From thence it follows, that since God is the essential and unbegotten beauty, sanctifying grace is the most perfect, the most noble participator of that beauty; the soul which is endowed and adorned with it is infinitely pleasing in the eyes of God. So much so that a great saint, to whom was revealed the wondrous beauty of a soul in a state of grace, used to say that she no longer was astonished that God had willed to shed the last drop of His precious Blood in order to cleanse it, and by His redemption, renew every trace of beauty which sin had entirely effaced.

But if God, who cannot deceive, is charmed with the beauty of a soul in a state of grace, how is it that we are so careless in enriching our souls by the practice of every virtue? Is it not lamentable that we should prefer to please a wretched being—uncomely though we be—rather than try to please the Divine Majesty by that true beauty which He is ever willing to give to those who seek Him?

We daily witness the pains that worldly-minded people take in dressing and decking out their bodies, merely for

the sake of pleasing others; and often do we witness that exterior ornaments are sought after and used to hide their natural defects.

We are careful to adorn our bodies which soon will be food for worms, and we neglect that most beautiful ornament of the soul which is the grace of God.

PÈRE DUNEAU.  
*Sermon in Advent.*

. . . . .

Acknowledge, O Christian, thy dignity, and after having been made participator of the divine nature, do not return to thy first state by leading a life, which would tarnish thy nobility.

Is it not a gift, exceeding all other gifts, that God should call man His child, and that man should call God his Father?

ST. LEO.  
*On the Nativity.*

## 15.—On Confidence in God.

FATHER HOUDRY and  
FATHER CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

"This is the confidence which we have towards God : that whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us."—1 JOHN v. 14.

[THE REV. FATHER VINCENT HOUDRY was born in Tours on the 22d of January 1630, on the Feast of St. Vincent of Saragosa, hence his name.

At an early age he manifested a taste for study and piety, and at the age of thirteen, in 1644, he entered the Society of Jesus. During the thirty years of his ministry Père Houdry distinguished himself as an eloquent preacher. His last years were passed in the library in the midst of books. Besides being the author of several learned works, he will be best known as the editor of that stupendous monument of industry, "*La Bibliothèque des Prédicateurs*," and from this work many extracts have been culled and translated.

He died at the College of Louis le Grand, in Paris, on the 29th of March 1729, aged ninety-eight years and three months. Although he was continually reading and writing, he never had occasion to make use of spectacles. His age and example would lead us to believe, that longevity of life is in favour of the learned and industrious.]

FULL confidence in the goodness of Almighty God is one of the sure marks of predestination.

The most criminal, corrupt, or wicked man who sincerely wishes to do penance for his past sins, will find that confidence in God is an efficacious and sovereign remedy for all his miseries.

Let him be penitent, let him persevere in hope, he, eventually, will be saved. God has said it, God has promised it;

is there any reason to doubt the word and promise of Him who is truth itself?

It is for this reason that hope has been compared to the anchor of a ship, and this comparison is consecrated by the Apostle St. Paul in his Epistles.

Should a vessel lose all its rigging in a tempest, if there still remain an anchor, there is hope that the crew may yet be saved.

The same thing might be said of the confidence in God; and it was for want of having recourse to this that Cain and Judas perished in their sins.

The first had angered God by jealousy and a cruel fratricide; but what put the climax to the curse was Cain saying in despair, "My crime is too great for any hope of pardon."

The second repents of the shameful treachery he had committed against the Son of God; but, says St. Chrysostom, had he confided in the goodness of his Divine Master, had he returned to implore His mercy, our dear Redeemer, who pardoned St. Peter and who prayed for His executioners, would no doubt have led this traitor back to penance.

This confidence in God has also another advantage: it is a mighty help against temptations. This is what the Gospel says so plainly, "In hope you will find your strength;" and again, "I shall hope, and there will be nothing to weaken me." In fine, what more powerful than having confidence in God?

To confide in God, is to lean upon Him. It is to call for His assistance, His goodness, His truth, His power.

With such arms, what can any one fear; for what can prevail against God? *Paratum cor ejus sperare in Domino, conformatum est cor ejus; non commovebitur.* It is in this confidence that one finds such fervent charity. This is easy to see by the difference there is between a presuming

or a timid love with that which Holy Scripture says will banish fear.

From that proceeds the saying of the Wise Man, "He who is animated by charity is like unto an eagle who flies with rapidity, and who cleaves the air without hindrance."

In conclusion, the Apostle did he not say to the early Christians, Serve God with love, because to reach perfection joy and hope are the most efficacious means?

PÈRE HOUDRY.

I feel so persuaded, O my God, that You graciously watch over those who hope in Thee, and that no one need require anything so long as they look up to Thee in all things, that I am determined for the future to lay at Your feet, all my anxieties and troubles. "In peace, in the self-same I will sleep and rest. For thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope" (*Ps. iv.*)

Men may deprive me of property and honour; sickness may take away my strength and other means of serving You; I may even lose Your grace by sin; but never, never will I lose my hope in Thee. I will cherish it unto that dreadful moment when all hell will be unchained to snatch my soul away. "No one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded" (*Eccles. ii. 11*).

I know, alas! I know too well, that I am weak, head-strong, and changeable; I know what temptations can do against the firmest resolution; I have seen some stars from heaven fall; but all these shall not frighten me so long as I hope in Thee.

I hold myself in readiness to meet bravely all misfortunes, because my hope is not shaken. I hope, too, that You will help me to overcome every spiritual enemy, that You will defend me against every assault, and You will make me triumph over my fiercest passions.

REV. PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.



## 16.—On Zeal for God.

FATHERS LAMBERT, CROISSET, and NOUET.

"I bear them witness, that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."—ROMANS x. 2.

[L'ABBÉ LAMBERT, at first the Vicar-General of the diocese of Meaux, was afterwards appointed secretary to Monseigneur de Juigné, Archbishop of Paris, and with him he travelled through Germany, France, and England. In addition to other works, this saintly servant of God published a life of Archbishop Juigné.

The good abbé died in Paris, on the 11th of June, 1836.]

We read in the annals of ecclesiastical history that the prefect Modestus was sent to St. Basil, at that time, Bishop of Cæsarea, with a message from the emperor, threatening him with his vengeance if he continued to exercise his zeal for the conversion of his subjects. The prefect made specious proposals, and told the saint that much might be expected from his master's generosity if he would but moderate his zeal. Promises succeeded menaces, for such as these are all that man can do. St. Basil replied that, where God was concerned, there is nothing more important for His servants to do, than to be firm in the exercise of their ministry.

The following portion of his reply is taken from the twentieth oration of St. Gregory of Nazianzen:—

"When there is any question of our essential duties, we will be as obliging and as humble as our rules prescribe; we should be sorry to show any arrogance, not only to

emperors or kings; but even to the lowest of men. But when the interests of God are concerned, we should recognise no human consideration, as we look to God alone. The most frightful torture, far from alarming me, would give me joy.

“Threaten as you will, put all kinds of outrages into execution, do your worst, go tell your master ; for you will gain nothing. Were you to reach the height of your cruel threats, you will never be able to force us to subscribe to your impious doctrines.”

The prefect, astonished at his firmness, told him that no one had ever spoken to him in that bold way.

“Perhaps,” replied the saint, “you have never spoken to a bishop before.”

FATHER LAMBERT.

*Adapted from “ Discours Ecclésiastiques.”*

. . . . .

It is an error to suppose that priests and missionaries ought alone to be zealous. There is not one who has not a mission to fulfil, without going out of his state in life ; not a single person who ought not to connect his own salvation with that of his brethren. Your own sanctification is, of course, your first and greatest business. Every one should look to this ; but every one is bound to edify his neighbour, by giving a good example. This zeal is common to all, and to all conditions of life.

Are you in office, have you inferiors, have you the cares of a family and servants ? Few professed missionaries have so much to answer for, and have to give an account of their salvation as you have.

Take especial care not to neglect this duty ; do not leave it to others ; watch continually over the conduct of those whom God has confided to your care. Children, servants, inferiors, are all, so to speak, so many trusts of

which you are liable to render an account to your Sovereign Master. Besides the efficacy of a good example, you are called upon to give them education, instruction, and good advice.

Watch over the manners of your children and servants; with regard to morals and religion, pass over nothing; do not suffer any one to give them bad example; check, warn, and correct with zeal and mildness.

In whatever condition of life you may be, remember that you have to fulfil the duties of an apostle. Christian charity obliges you to take to heart the salvation of your brethren, and do not forget to do all you can to obtain this desirable object.

It is not solely by preaching that the conversion of many are brought about; there are other ways much more efficacious. A kind word in season, a warning, a charitable advice, a good example, an alms—all these may be used with a zeal truly apostolic.

There is no father or mother who can fail to do an immensity of good in the home and with the servants.

What good cannot a superior in a community do, if he is animated with a pure and ardent zeal and an exemplary piety! What an immense benefit could princes do at the court and in their estates if they had at heart the truths of our holy religion! Would not honour, honesty, and justice then reign throughout their lands?

CROSET.

*Année Chrétienne.*

. . . . .

The will of My Father, says His divine Son, and the reason He sent Me, is to save souls, and not to lose one He intrusted to Me. In fact, as God has nothing more dear to Him than the salvation of men, so nothing is more pleasing to Him than to see them withdrawn from the

abyss and led into the right path. *Nihil ita gratum est Deo et ita curæ, ut animarum salus*, says St. Chrysostom.

It is the favourite theme of Holy Writ, the omega of all the mysteries, the centre of His love, the end of all His designs and of His labours; for which, as says St. Augustine, He created the heavens, extended the seas, and formed the foundations of the earth. And what is of greater value? for this He sent His only Son.

This is the reason that St. Gregory the Great gives when he tells us that we cannot offer to the Almighty a more pleasing service than a zeal for souls; and St. Chrysostom assures us that we can do nothing more agreeable to God than to sacrifice our life to the common benefit of all men.

Meditate awhile on this, you who have so many persons under your charge and direction; and at least, if you cannot place them in heaven, try not to lose one whom God has given to you to direct and govern, to whose hands He has confided under your care, so that you may be able to say with our Saviour, *Quos dedisti Mihi, non perdidisti ex eis quemquam*.

PÈRE NOUET.  
*Méditations.*

## 17.—On the Incarnation.

ST. BERNARD, ST. ATHANASIUS,  
PÈRE LOUIS DE GRENADA,  
and ST. JEROME.

“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.”—ISAIAH vii. 14.

[ST. BERNARD was one of the most influential ecclesiastics of the Middle Ages. He was born at Fontaines, in Burgundy, A.D. 1091. In the year 1113, he became a monk at Citeaux, and at the early age of twenty-four, was elected Abbot of Clairvaux. At that time Clairvaux was a savage desert, but St. Bernard made it teem with fertility. He wished that his monks, while serving God, should also be useful to man, and he prescribed that each of them in his turn, and according to his capacity, should attend to manual labour and study.

St. Bernard was called the honeyed teacher, and his writings were styled a stream from Paradise.

He died in the year 1153, and was canonised by Alexander III. A.D. 1174.]

I HAVE often thought of, and meditated on, the holy eagerness of the patriarchs who so sighed for the coming of the Messiah; and I felt confused, and was, moreover, so penetrated with grief, that I could scarcely refrain from weeping, so much was I ashamed to see the tepidity and indifference of these unhappy days.

For who amongst us is filled with so much joy in the fulfilment of this mystery, as did the saints of the Old Testament, at the promises which so called forth their longing desires?

Many, it is true, may rejoice at the celebration of this feast; but I am much afraid that it is less on account of the feast, than through vanity.

ST. BERNARD.  
*Sermon on Canticles.*

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[ST. ATHANASIUS, Bishop of Alexandria, was born in that city about the year 296, and died A.D. 373. Forty-six years of his official life he spent in banishment in defending the Nicene Creed.

The best edition of his life and writings is that by Montfauçon, 3 vols. folio. Paris, 1698.]

The Son of God has taken upon Himself our poverty and miseries, in order that we may participate in His riches. His sufferings will one day render us impassible, and His death will make us immortal.

We should find our joy in His tears, our resurrection in His tomb, our sanctification in His baptism, in accordance with what He says in the Gospel: "I sanctify myself in order that they also may be sanctified in truth."

There is not a phase in the life of our Saviour, which does not refer to Calvary. The Good Master was born in the stable only to die on the Cross; His life, which I should study continually, would show me all the riches of His love; I should see therein all the profound mysteries of His incarnation and redemption; I should discover what I have cost; I should appreciate the beauty and goodness of Jesus, and I shall then cry out, "O happy fault which has procured us such a Redeemer!" *O felix culpa, quæ tantum ac talem meruit habere salvatorem.*

ST. ATHANASIUS.

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[LOUIS DE GRENADA was born in the year 1505, in the city of Grenada, Spain. He took the habit of St. Dominic, and by his writings proved himself to be one of the most illustrious of his order.

This saintly religious died in the year 1588. His writings have been constantly quoted by St. Charles Borromeo, in his instructions to his

flock. St. Francis de Sales was never weary of studying his works, and often recommended his books to his penitents.]

In order that nothing should be wanting to heighten the glory of this great mystery, before Jesus was born, or rather from the beginning of the world and from all ages, He has been promised to the patriarchs, He has been announced by the prophets, foretold by the sybils, represented throughout by ancient ceremonies, sacrifices, and every sacrament of the old law.

And when He deigned to descend from heaven to earth, by what circumstances, what prodigies, has not His coming been accompanied, which were but reasonable for so supreme a Majesty.

An angel sent by God has brought the glad tidings, He has been conceived of the Holy Ghost, He had chosen the most pure and holy of virgins to become Incarnate in her womb, and the body He has taken has been united to the Divinity from the very first moment of His birth.

Pagans imagined that it was unworthy of the majesty of God to clothe Himself with a substance so degrading as our flesh; but it is easy to show them how this humanity has been glorified, what riches it has possessed, and, far from having been a thing below the dignity of God, it has, on the contrary, considerably added to His glory, by uniting these two natures into one person.

It is in such marvels as these that the wisdom of God appears more apparent. It shows also, that He alone is capable of elevating lowliness, of aggrandising that which is nothing, of filling with honour and dignity that which was contemptible. For if, by an effect of His goodness, He had wished to humiliate Himself by becoming man, nevertheless having taken the nature of man, instead of receiving ignominy therefrom, He has, on the contrary, received an infinity of glory, since it was in His power to

do what He would have wished, without making use of anything but His will alone.

But what words can describe the immensity of the various gifts with which the Holy Ghost has endowed this sacred humanity, the first and foremost being, His unspeakable union with the Divine Word, which is the greatest of all the wonders which the power of God could make?

Through that this sacred humanity has been raised above all that God has created, and beyond anything that His infinite power is capable of creating; and in order that this supreme dignity may correspond with His grandeur and magnificence, it has been made the fountain of every grace. The grace of being the universal Head of all mankind has been given to Him, in order that, through it all the treasures of heaven should be communicated to the children of Adam.

GRENADA.

*Meditations on the Love of God.*

. . . . .

Here is a wonder which in itself is out of the ordinary course of nature, of which experience has not taught us, a marvel which reason ignores, of which the human intellect cannot conceive, which astonishes heaven and earth, which creates admiration even among the celestial choir; and this mystery is, that Gabriel the archangel announces to Mary that "the Lord is with thee," and the accomplishment thereof is the work of the Holy Ghost.

ST. JEROME.

*Sermon on the Assumption.*



## 18.—On the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

CARDINAL BÉRULLE and PÈRE DOZENNES.

"I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith to him, Thou hast said it."—MATTHEW xxvi. 63, 64.

[PIERRE BÉRULLE, Cardinal of the holy Roman empire, was born in 1575, at the Chateau of Sérilly, near Troyes, in Champagne. He early distinguished himself in the famous conference of Fontainebleau. Henry IV. appointed him as his Almoner, and sent him to Spain to bring some Carmelites to Paris. It was principally through his exertions that this glorious order flourished in Paris. Some time after his return from Spain he founded the Congregation of the French Oratory, of which he was the first general. This institution, founded on that of St. Philip's Oratory, is nevertheless so different in its rules, &c., that it was found necessary to make it a separate congregation. The French Oratory was sanctioned by Paul V. in 1613, and it brought into notice many men illustrious for their learning and piety. Disputes raised by a powerful party did much harm, but very many of the congregation remained attached to the Church and to the decrees of the holy Roman pontiffs. Urban VIII. rewarded Bérulle's merits by a cardinal's Hat. Henry IV. and Louis XIII. both wished the cardinal to accept the offers of important bishoprics, but nothing could induce him to alter his first plan of life. Simplicity, modesty, poverty, and temperance were ever his favourite virtues. It is said that he never passed a day without offering up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and he died of apoplexy at the altar, a little before the consecration, on the 1st of October 1629, aged fifty-five years. Among his friends and admirers of his virtues may be named St. Francis de Sales, Cæsar de Bus, and Cardinal Bentivoglio.]

AFTER having meditated on our Lord and Saviour in His eternal generation, should we not then take into consideration His temporal generation? They are both ineffable.

*Generationem ejus quis enarrabit* (Isaias liii. 8). Who shall declare His generation?

Jesus is equally great in His humiliations, because He is always God. Admiration is almost our sole portion. In fact, how wonderful it is, that Jesus should have united the privileges of His divinity to the meanness and misery of our human nature, and that, without ceasing to be a God infinite, eternal, immense, immortal, independent, He should have become a God-man enclosed within the narrow confines of a body, of a stable, and of the swaddling-clothes that enveloped Him in His infancy! That Jesus should have personally united our meanness with His grandeur, our mortality with His immortality, His divine nature with our human nature, becoming Son of Man and Son of the Virgin Mary for all eternity, as from all eternity, He is Son of God and only Son of the Eternal Father! We must adore Jesus in this new condition and in this profound mystery, in the unity of His divine person and in the diversity of their natures—the one divine and eternal, the other human and temporal.

It is with this view that, raising our hearts to You, O Jesus, to pay You our homage, we adore You as receiving Your everlasting essence from the Eternal Father, and as giving Your essence and substance to human nature; that You have united to Yourself for ever a union so intimate, so mighty, so glorious, and so divine.

Oh, adorable state! oh, ineffable mystery! oh, happy moment of the Incarnation, which makes man God and God man, which gives to heaven a King of glory, to earth a Sovereign, to the angels a Redeemer, and to men a Saviour! O God, who has willed that Your only-begotten Son, who, being God from all eternity in You, should have been made man in time and eternity for us, grant us the grace of ever honouring that wondrous life and that divine Word, in order that we may be animated with His Spirit

on earth, and that we may rejoice with Him in heaven by constantly meditating on Him who is our life and glory.

CARD. DE BÉRULLE.  
*On the Grandeurs of Jesus.*

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*Extracts from a book entitled "The Divinity of Jesus Christ," by LE PÈRE DOZENNES.*

To convince the Jews that Jesus Christ was really and truly the Messiah they expected—promised by the law and foretold by the prophets—miracles were necessary so as to make unbelief inexcusable, and which ought to have compelled them to say with Nicodemus, "We know that Thou art come a teacher from God, for no man can do these signs which Thou dost unless God be with Him" (*John* iii. 2); for if the Son of God was not manifested by means of miracles, His divinity would not have been acknowledged, inasmuch as the humble life of the Saviour seemed to be incompatible with the Supreme Majesty.

Jesus Christ himself has He not said that if He had not performed works which only a God-man could accomplish, the Jews might have had some reasonable excuse for rejecting His testimony, and would not have acknowledged Him as the Messiah? His miracles, then, had authorised His mission and manifested His divinity; although it may be said that, in fact, there have been false miracles and wicked impostors.

The miracles of the Saviour are attested by unimpeachable witnesses and by authentic testimonies; the reputation of His miracles attracted around Him crowds of people who could not *all* be deceived, and five thousand persons witnessed the multiplication of barley loaves, with which they were fully satiated.

I am aware that the Pharisees and scribes wished to

take no heed of facts which they attributed to the illusions of the devil or to the agency of magic; but what connection can there be between light and darkness?

Have there never been professors of the black art who perform prodigies? Have not magicians professed to cure the blind and raise the dead?

Besides, a man so incontestably holy as Jesus Christ was, was it meet and proper to make use of the power and ministry of the devil? And the devil, on his part, would he have made use of a man who could have made his idols powerless, his oracles mute? How, then, could you reconcile with the magic art, works which are only done in confirmation of a doctrine which abhors all diabolical operations?

More than this, have not these wondrous performances been examined by the severest censors, submitted to the most rigorous critics, and to the inquiries of judges far from being favourable to Jesus?

At the sight of these miracles, how many persons of consequence among the Jews have acknowledged Him to be a Prophet sent from God? How many others who, believing in their hearts, have not dared to make a public profession of faith for fear of being banished from the synagogue? And since that time, have not Celsus, Porphyry, Julian the Apostate, Mahomet—the greatest enemies Jesus Christ ever had in the world—have they not honestly confessed that He was a man of miracles, thereby giving testimony of His doctrine, His merit, and consequently of His Divinity?

. . . . .

The angels have honoured the Word Incarnate on His entry into the world, and have acknowledged how much is the Son of God above His servants: "Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more

excellent name than they" (*Hebrews* i. 4). They have served Him during His mortal and suffering life, as also in the sacred position of His immortality. This is what the following words intend to convey: "Amen I say to you, you shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (*John* i. 51). They have ministered to Him, I say, during the whole course of His life, and you know the service they gave Him in the desert after the devil had tempted Him; they consoled Him in His agony, they wept for His death in a manner which angels only can shed tears: "The angels of peace shall weep bitterly" (*Isaias* xxxiii. 7). They joyfully announced His resurrection to His disciples, they accompanied Him everywhere whilst He dwelt visibly on earth, they formed the procession and joined in the triumph on His entry into heaven, they will be His escort on the day of the last judgment, they will gather around Him in heaven for ever and ever; the noblest, the highest in the choir will esteem themselves happy to be beneath His feet, and, angels as they are, they will gladly acknowledge a man as their King on the throne of God itself.

## 19.—On Belief in Christ our Lord.

MASSILLON, BISHOP FROMENTIÈRE, and  
ST. JEROME.

"Go and teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—MATTHEW xxviii. 19.

INCREDULOUS mortals are still to be met with, who, after the accomplishment of all that has been foretold—after having seen the consummation of the mysteries of Jesus Christ—the excellence of His Gospels—the manifestation of His miracles—the wisdom of His precepts—the vanity of the pomp of ages—the destruction of idols—the utter confusion of the Cæsars—the plots of the whole world against Him; there are, I say, still to be found men who doubt of the truths of His holy religion, who ask for fresh miracles, and who encourage those who try to confute or to ridicule what the labours of the apostles have effected, what the prudence of so many missionaries have established—what innumerable miracles have confirmed—what the purity of so many virgins have honoured—what the austerity of hermits have sealed—what the sacrifice and detachment of so many servants of God have authorised, and what the example of so many grand saints have inspired.

It is that a religion of seventeen centuries, ever the same, ever consistent and universally accepted by the world, seems to have maintained its authority.

For in the midst of the triumphs of Christianity there have continually risen rebellious children against it, children whom the Almighty has given over to the pride of their

self-conceit, to the misguidance of their reason, to the corruptions of their mind, who blaspheme what they ignore, who deny what they do not understand; of wicked men who pervert the grace of God, convert light to darkness; of disobedient men who despise every rule, who reject all authority not their own, who defile all their ways like unto animals without reason, and who are waiting to be summoned to suffer the punishment for their blasphemy at the judgment seat of God.

The Church of Jesus Christ has found the whole universe to be docile and submissive to its precepts; the Cæsars, to whom she forbade luxury; nations, on whom she enforced obedience, to whom she preached suffering; to the rich, to whom she recommended poverty; to the poor, to whom she enjoined resignation; to all, to whom she preached mortification, penance, and self-denial. This faith, however, and this religion, preached by twelve poor sinners without science, without talent, without support, without favour, has overcome the world, and has made it acknowledge the truths of its inscrutable mysteries; and the folly of the cross has proved to be wiser than all the wisdom of ages.

What more! My brother, all turn against the Church; yet that only serves to increase its power. To be loyal and to be a martyr was the same thing, and the more violent were the persecutions the more it acquired strength, and the blood of the martyrs became a fruitful seed of Christianity.

MASSILLON.

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[JEAN LOUIS DE FROMENTIÈRE, Bishop of Aire, was born in 1652 at St. Denis of Gastines. In the year 1672 he was commissioned to preach the Advent sermons before Louis XIV. He died in 1684, universally regretted by his flock.]

It was not the eloquence of the apostles that confirmed

the faith; their language was simple and plain. It was not the easy belief of their doctrine; it was a God crucified they preached. It was not the indulgence of their morals; for they spoke, as their Master did, but of the cross, poverty, and patience. And how is it that the whole universe has surrendered to a preaching so novel and so strange? How could have so many clever men been able to submit their understanding to truths so startling? How could so many who, immersed in sensuality, so resolutely embrace a life of mortifications, if the apostles, the messengers of God, had not been the instruments of His power, and if those divine clouds had not astonished the earth by their brightness before watering it with their rains?

Do you not wonder at the boldness which twelve poor sinners displayed when they parcelled out the world among them? It is said that the successors of Alexander divided it, but it was already a world conquered; instead of this, the apostles dispersed to conquer. One had the task of subduing Asia, another Egypt, another Judea and those countries which the conquest of nations had not reached.

What is more surprising, they all succeeded, and by what means? And this is more wondrous still, by a doctrine contrary to sense and reason (at least in appearance), by preaching a God crucified.

BISHOP FROMENTIÈRE.

. . . . .

The Master of that religion has been crucified. His servants have been chained down like criminals, and yet for all that, His religion grows and flourishes every day.

ST. JEROME.  
*Epistle, No. L.*



## 20.—On the Love of Jesus for Men.

PÈRE EUSÈBE DE NIEREMBERG.

"As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love."

—JOHN xv. 9.

[JEAN EUSÈBE DE NIEREMBERG was of German extraction, but was born at Madrid in the year 1590, and died there in 1658 at the age of sixty-eight. He belonged to the Society of Jesus, and was a most penitent and mortified priest, and, in addition to this, a hard-working author; for he wrote many learned treatises in Spanish, German, and Latin.

The following extract is from a little work written by Le Père Eusèbe Nieremberg, entitled "*Jesus Amabilis*." This book was originally written in German; Le Père Brignon translated it into Latin, now rendered into English.]

CAN we have any conception of a greater love for men than that of our Saviour, since, however wicked or ungrateful we may have been, He does not cease to love us? He forgives us our trespasses so readily that one would say that He was under an obligation to us. He rewards us for our good works liberally, never revealing how much He has contributed towards their performance. He, as it were, magnifies the little services we pay Him, without letting us know the immense assistance He has given us.

Although, in fact, we have done next to nothing for Him, He does not cease to be grateful, and showers down graces with profusion, just as if we had rendered Him some important service.

Ah! Heart of Jesus—Heart truly liberal and full of love

—who gives us everything, and to whom we owe all, and who by His own gifts, makes Himself our debtor! After that, who could fail to love Him with all their heart, with all their mind and all their strength, and offer up repeated acts of thanksgiving for goodnesses so bountiful, love so generous?

. . . . .

If we ought to love our Saviour for the many blessings He has bestowed upon us, we ought no less to love Him for the many misfortunes from which He has delivered us, and from which only He could have freed us.

It is He, who has had compassion on us, and who, being our only resource, has taken upon Himself to pay all our debts and to expiate, by a cruel and bloody death, all our sins; it is He, then, who alone has redeemed the human race from misfortune in which He was so willingly engaged; it is He who has drawn us from hell, who, having broken our chains, has made us free. Alas! without Thee, where should we be now? We should have been cast into the darkness of the abyss. It is He who from darkness has revealed to us the light of day, who from this dark abyss has shown us the way to heaven, to which we are entitled to aspire. What should we be without Him but a mass of dust and corruption? It is He who has so cleansed us that we are like unto the angels; in one word, it is He who, making us sharers in His glory, has delivered us from every kind of misery, who has replenished us with blessings without number.

And after all this, can we possibly be ungrateful, can we have but little love for Him? We ought indeed to look upon Him as our greatest benefactor.

If the meanest of men had rescued us from perilous danger, although without much exertion, should we not take a liking to him? What feelings of gratitude ought

we not therefore to cherish for One who has rescued us from dangers without number—a Saviour who, to show His love, has so generously shed every drop of His precious Blood?

O my Saviour and my God, how can we sufficiently repay You for Your infinite goodness—You who have delivered us from the tyranny of the evil one, from the bondage of sin?

For let us try to realise, if we can, what is the extent of the misery from which the Saviour has delivered us; meditate seriously for a while and you will not be surprised. We shall wonder at His boundless love, and offer up repeated acts of thanksgiving for so many blessings.

A man who walks in his sleep and, without knowing where he goes, passes over the edge of a precipice, is seized with a shuddering wonder when he awakens and sees the danger he has escaped.

Let us awaken and, with the light of faith, look down the precipice from which the Saviour has withdrawn us—look down again, and its depth will astonish us.

Many there are who tremble with fear when they cast their glances from the extreme point of a very lofty mountainous rock; how ought we not to tremble at the sight of that abyss into which Adam had thrown us and from which our Saviour has withdrawn us?

Nevertheless the distance from heaven to hell, is not so far removed, as was the state of sin in which we were, to the state of grace in which we are, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

LE PÈRE EUSÈBE NIEREMBERG.

## 21.—On the Nativity of our Lord.

PÈRE DU JARRY and ST. AUGUSTINE.

“And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling-clothes, and laid Him in a manger.”—ST. LUKE ii. 7.

[LAURENT JUILLARD DU JARRY was born, in the year 1658, at Jarry, a village near to Saintes.

Soon after he was ordained, he became celebrated as a preacher, and, in addition to this, he was acknowledged to be an excellent poet.

He died in the year 1730, at the Priory of Nôtre Damedu Jarry, in the diocese of Saintes.]

MY brethren, let us gaze upon the Son of God in the poverty of His birth. What does He not say to us there? Let us enter in spirit into the stable; we shall hear a voice issuing therefrom, saying—

Blush at having beautiful houses like unto palaces, such grand furniture, so much useless apparel, whilst I have only a crib instead of a bed, and two vile animals for company. Blush in those magnificent rooms wherein you try to be sheltered from the least inconveniences of the season, whilst a half-exposed stable leaves Me a prey to all the hardships of a cold season.

Blush at the aversion you have for every kind of humiliation, at the precautions you take to continue in a condition that flatters your vanity, at the artifices you employ to conceal a poverty you ought to be proud of, at the contempt you display to all, who are not within the pale of your society.

Blush to bear perchance the insignia of the poverty and humiliations of Jesus Christ in your state of life, and yet try to aspire to the pomp and luxury of the world shining around.

Let us contemplate this scene as faith points out; let us enter this manger in spirit; let us see this hidden Deity who, in the darkness of night, when all creatures are silent—in want of every necessary, and is made poor to enrich us.

This Child is born in an empty stable, deserted by every one; it is the God who created them, and whom they obey; it is the everlasting Wisdom which assists at all the councils of God, and which it has possessed from the beginning of time.

This divine wisdom, hidden in the limbs of an infant, was begotten in the brightness of the saints.

Ungrateful, deluded man, you who have not wished to know this divine wisdom in the richness of His beauty, see Him now in the poverty of a stable! Laden as you have been with so many benefits and blessings, you have not recognised the hand which has spread them over you with such profusion; you have closed your ears to that striking voice which appeals to you with as many mouths as there are creatures: O man, adore thy God! His ingenious love has suggested another voice to persuade you: He teaches you through the poverty of the crib: "Now therefore, my children, hear me" (*Prov. viii.*)

Ah, my brethren! what does not this divine Child say, that eternal Word which is now so silent?

No occasion to seek for rules of piety to lead us on, for we learn all that we need know and practise in this adorable book. All the prophets, all the doctors, all the apostles speak through the mouth of Him who has opened theirs. The stable at Bethlehem is the school where all Christians ought to study the science of salvation. All the ways to

heaven, every path of virtue, begin and finish through Him who is the Alpha and the Omega, and being the way, the truth, and the life, He has opened the way to heaven to all.

Providence of my God, exclaims St. Bernard, how wonderful art thou! Carnal and animal creatures have no conception of the works of God. Even wisdom itself is made flesh to make it intelligible to men of flesh.

It is no longer through men, full of a holy fear, that God proclaims His oracles; mysterious messages in shrouded language, no longer issue from the mountain top amidst thunder and lightning; these are heard no more. It is from the farther end of a grotto, it is from the height of a crib, it is in the silence of night, it is the mouth of a Child wrapped in swaddling-clothes that the Incarnate Wisdom exclaims, "Behold to thee, wisdom is manifested in the flesh."

Come, ye profound philosophers, ye refined politicians, ye clever men—enter into the stable; there is your lyceum, your academy, deposit your proud learning, your studied lessons, your captious rhetoric at the feet of this adorable Doctor who exposes the vanity, errors, and littleness of everything.

Let all the fire of eloquence, all the pride of wisdom, all the subtlety of philosophy, all the refinements of policy disappear at the sight of this divine Child: *Ecce tibi in carne exhibetur sapientia.*

Preachers of the Gospel, happy organs of that eternal Word who sends you; you who, as well as St. John the Baptist, are only voices to proclaim the glory of God in every temple, kneel before this Child and acknowledge the Master who has loosened the tongues of the prophets and apostles, who has inspired the martyrs and young virgins with words that astonished tyrants and confounded pagan philosophers; and when you shall have adored Him silently

and humbly, lost in wonder, speak and consecrate every ornament of eloquence to the praise and glory of Him who has endowed you with gifts.

Happy the docile listeners who, opening their hearts to that invisible Preacher who speaks to them through your mouths, can hear the voice of our Lord in those of men!

Teach us then, O Child divine! We speak in Your place simply to exhort Christians to hear You instead of hearing us.

DU JARRY.  
*On Christmas-Tide.*

. . . . .

Would you wish to know who is He, who is born in this way? Learn, then, who He is, and how mighty is He. It is the Word of the Eternal Father, the Creator of the universe, the Peace of the world, the Saviour of men, He, who is the joy and hope of the just.

The glory of this Child was, that a virgin should bring Him forth into the world, and the glory of the Virgin Mother was, that she should have for a Son, a Man who was at the same time God.

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*Sermo. de Tempore.*

## 22.—On the Circumcision of our Lord.

BOURDALOUE and FATHER FABER.

"And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus."—LUKE ii. 12.

"I am not come to destroy the law or the prophets."—MATTHEW v. 17.

ON this, the Feast of the Circumcision, our Saviour, the Son of God, teaches us how we should co-operate in the great work of our salvation, and He gives us a means as divine as it is indispensable and necessary, namely, that mysterious but real circumcision of the will and heart—a circumcision for which He frames a law, of which He explains the precept, and of which He facilitates the use.

He proposes the circumcision of the heart, and He makes it necessary; for though He does abolish the old circumcision, or, to speak more correctly, the ancient circumcision finishes with Him only because He established the new, and, as St. Augustine says, He makes use of the shadow and figure only because He brings forward the light and the truth: *Suscepit umbram allaturus lucem, suscipit figuram daturus veritatem*. Now this light and truth were, that we should all be circumcised of heart, as the Jews were according to the flesh.

Circumcision of the heart, a cutting off of useless and inordinate desires, uneasy and fantastical wishes, immoderate and ill-regulated longings, carnal and worldly desires, criminal and unlawful wishes—all of which take root in the heart and corrupt it. This is how St. Paul understood it; and because these pernicious desires are excited



in us by vain objects which delight us, by false interests which blind us, by dangerous occasions which drag us onward, and pervert us. This circumcision of the heart ought to be an entire separation from such objects, a complete renunciation of those false interests, a wise and wholesome withdrawal from those occasions; for these are what was typified in the Judaic circumcision. This is how God prepared the world, when He compelled Abraham and all his descendants to be circumcised.

Now our Saviour proposes this spiritual circumcision as an indispensable and requisite means to procure our salvation; for what more necessary than to tear away, stifle, mortify, and destroy all that is the beginning and cause of damnation?

This spiritual circumcision is a circumcision which is not solely exterior, but which penetrates, so to speak, into the innermost recesses of the soul: *Non quæ in manifesto est circumcisio*; a circumcision which is no longer from the hand of man, but which is God's work and sanctifies man in the sight of God—a circumcision which no longer consists in the cutting of the flesh, but in the renouncement of the vices and the concupiscence of the flesh—a circumcision, of which the mind and heart are the two principals as well as the two subjects; the two principals, because it is carried out through them, and the two subjects, because it is within them—that is to say, it is a circumcision of the heart which is made, not only literally, but in the fervour of the will: *Circumcisio cordis in spiritu, non litterâ*.

These are the animated expressions of the Apostle, who defines what may be called the new circumcision. The man of the world and a religious ought both to be circumcised at heart; but to compare the wants of the one with the other, this circumcision of the heart is in one sense more indispensably necessary for the man of the world than for the religious, who, by the vows of his profession,

has renounced everything; because the man of the world has stronger passions to fight against than a religious, since he has before him more opportunities of exciting them; because the man of the world is much more exposed to be tempted than a religious, consequently he ought to watch over himself, and should continually try to deny himself and endeavour to persevere.

After the first step a religious has taken—after that first sacrifice which has deprived him of everything—it would seem that there was nothing more to be done; but you in the world, what have you hitherto given to God, or what further sacrifices have you not to make and offer to God?

BOURDALOUE.  
*On the Circumcision.*

. . . . .

The Child Jesus' Bloodshedding in the circumcision was another penance of His infancy, which, for many reasons, may be regarded as a pattern for the unnecessary mortifications of the saints, if, indeed, any mortification can be strictly deemed unnecessary even for the most innocent of the sons of men. He needed not the rite. He required no ceremonial covenant with God, who was God himself. That Flesh needed no consecration, which was already united to a divine Person.

It was a strange, separate, unaccountable Bloodshedding, standing, as it seems, in a peculiar relation to the other Bloodsheddings; as it was not only no part of the redemption of the world, but was utterly detached from the Passion.\*

It did not keep the compact with the Father, which was death, and nothing short of death; so that the drops that were shed were not shed to the saving of souls.

\* See Treatise on the Precious Blood, chaps. i. and v.

Was it the homage of the Infancy to the Passion? Was it, like the bloody sweat upon Mount Olivet, an outburst of the Sacred Heart's impatience for the plenitude of Calvary?

To Himself truly it was pain, to His mother sorrow, to Joseph a heavenly perplexity, to the angels a wonder, to the saints a pattern and a mystery.

FATHER FABER (Orat.)  
*Bethlehem.*

. . . . .

Jesus Christ is circumcised as the son of Abraham; He is called Jesus, as the Son of God.

He whom no one can convict of sin, He who had no necessity to be circumcised, nevertheless makes use of the cure for sin, and consents to suffer a shameful and painful remedy.

We, on the contrary, who do not blush at the hideousness of sin, are ashamed of doing penance; a sign of extreme folly.. Thus we are slaves of sin, and we blush at the remedy, which is still more criminal.

ST. BERNARD.  
*On the Circumcision.*

## 23.—On the Holy Name of Jesus.

PÈRE NOUET, S.J.

“ You are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—1 COR. vi. 11.

*Extracts from a book entitled “ The Man of Prayer,” written by that servant of God, LE PÈRE NOUET, S.J.*

THERE is no work, says St. Paul, but that we should begin by invoking this holy Name: “ All whatsoever you do in word, or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus ” (*Col.* iii. 17).

Here, then, is the best method we can adopt in our work and in the whole conduct of our life. If, to make our life happy, we ought to bless Jesus, morning, noon, and night, we cannot draw down His blessing more effectually than by invoking His holy Name, which is the price of His blood and of His life.

It is true, to do this worthily, we have need of His help; but He is too jealous of His glory to refuse even this, and we need not fear but that He will not fail to assist us, since it is He himself who has inspired us.

Let us then open our hearts to Him, in order that He may engrave thereon His holy Name; and if you earnestly wish to receive His divine inspirations, make yourself worthy of His promises.

Let us be thoroughly convinced that the greatest honour we can pay to the Son of God, in His quality of Redeemer, is to embrace courageously every means which He holds out to us to save our souls. Our happiness is so mixed up with His glory, that we cannot be lost without doing Him an injustice, and to snatch from Him that which is most dear to Him, namely, our eternal salvation.

If we have this holy Name deeply engraven on our hearts, it will not be difficult to imagine but that it should be often on our lips, that is to say, that we should invoke it often and often, and that we should do our best to impress it upon the hearts of others; for it is so sweet a perfume that it seeks only to be spread far and wide; it is a spring so limpid that nothing makes it more plentiful and clearer than when many come to slake their thirst; it is a light which ought to illuminate the universe.

Oh! what a joy to be able to contribute in some degree to the glory of Jesus, and to the veneration of His most holy Name! Oh! that I could induce all men to pay Him homage, and that I could hear every tongue proclaim His praises!

Here is the best and foremost of all my desires, that at the holy Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth, in hell; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus is in the glory of His Father. *Omnis lingua confiteatur quia Dominus Jesus Christus in gloria est Dei Patris (Phil. ii.)*

A true devotion to the holy Name will help to obtain our own sanctification; for in saving our own souls, we accomplish the greatest desire of our Saviour, and we contribute on our part to do that which adds an additional glory to Him, which is our own salvation.

Our salvation depends, on the one part, on Him; on the other, on ourselves. On His part He has abundantly supplied us with all that was necessary to complete the work of that grand, important, and sole hope of a happy eternity. He has cured all our infirmities; He has given us preservatives and wholesome remedies against all our vicious habits; He has delivered us from the power of the devil; He has reconciled us with His Eternal Father; He has paid all our debts; He has surmounted every obstacle to our salvation, and, through

excess of love, He has shed His Blood, and after suffering excruciating pains He expired on the cross. But, after all, if we do not make a good use of His graces, all that He has done and suffered will be in vain, inasmuch as we deprive Him of the glory of His holy Name.

In addition to this, the most solid devotion to the holy Name of Jesus is to love and try zealously to obtain the salvation of our neighbour. Nothing is so dear to the Sacred Heart as the salvation of a soul. His life so full of hardships, His death so cruel, are evident proofs of this.

How careful ought those to be who have been called to the ministry of God's Word, and to other functions which contribute to the salvation of souls who have been ransomed by His precious Blood.

How glorious to be employed in His service, to have the power of dispensing the merits of His sufferings and death.

You whose vocation it is to work continually for the salvation of those souls intrusted to your care, think seriously how sad it would be if one soul should perish through your negligence. But what would it be if, instead of saving souls, your conduct through life should be a cause of scandal?

Oh! let us think of what we are and what we ought to be. We ought to be as so many saviours of men in our intercourse with the world, edifying them by our example, instructing them, succouring them, praying always for them, and by our ardour and zeal doing our best to secure their salvation.

Listen, then, to the voice of the Blood of that Redeemer who beseeches you, by virtue of His Name and the excess of His love, to help Him to make His Name efficacious by saving souls, and by making them partakers of the fruit of His precious Blood.

## 24.—On the Feast of the Epiphany.

ST. AUGUSTINE, ST. CHRYSOSTOM, and  
PÈRE MONTMOREL.

“All they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense, and showing forth praises to the Lord.”—ISAIAH lx. 6.

IT will readily be admitted that the lights and graces which the Magi received, were immense and extraordinary, since they were enlightened, outwardly as well as inwardly.

But, truly, could less have been done to convince the Gentiles, or to draw them to the knowledge of a God-man whom they had not as yet seen command the waves of the sea, or raise the dead, or restore sight to the blind—a God who only visibly showed Himself as an ordinary child, silent, poor, and weak?

Nevertheless, if the Magi had had the same indifference which the majority of Christians have for heavenly things, they would have perhaps looked upon the star only as a curiosity, and they would have met perchance to seek for natural causes to account for its appearance. They would not have hastened to set out on so long a journey; and in delaying to obey the secret order which impelled them onwards, they would have lost the greatest of blessings.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

*Sermon xxxv. De Tempore.*

. . . . .

St. Chrysostom assures us that God caused the star to appear in order to convince the Jews of their infidelity,

and to show them that their ingratitude was inexcusable. For as Jesus Christ came upon earth to call the whole world to the knowledge of His name, and to be acknowledged and adored by all nations, He opens the gate of faith to the Gentiles, and He instructs His chosen people through the medium of foreigners.

. . . . .

God seeing the indifference with which the Jews listened to all the prophecies which promised the birth of the Saviour, He summoned the wise men from the East to seek for the King of the Jews in the midst of the Jews, and He willed that Persia should teach the former what they did not care to learn from the oracles of their prophets; in order that, if they had amongst them any men of good-will, this visit of the kings might lead them to believe, and if they wished still to be obstinate, no excuse would be of any avail. For what could they think or say when they witnessed these Magi, guided only by a star, seeking and adoring Him whom they had rejected?

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

*On the Second Chapter of St. Matthew.*

. . . . .

No obstacle seemed to be too formidable for the Magi to overcome, no difficulty could shake their resolution; for as soon as they saw the star they felt an inward secret inspiration, and immediately they left their kingdoms and carried with them the offerings they intended to present to Him whom the Scripture calls "The King of kings and the Lord of lords."

They generously faced danger or death by asking for the King of the Jews in the capital of Judea.

Happy Magi! exclaims one of the Fathers, who, in the presence of a cruel king, boldly proclaimed themselves to be confessors of the faith.



The same grace which our Lord has given to pagans, it may be truly said that He has given to us many and many a time.

For example, the edifying examples we see, the sermons we hear, the good books we read, the holy inspirations we feel, the pious reflections we make, are as so many stars which shine and guide us on our way.

He calls us, says St. Gregory, through the writings of the Fathers, through the voice of pastors, through the illnesses which He sends us, through adversities which well-nigh overwhelm us. See, continues this holy doctor, by how many stars we are invited to go to Jesus Christ!

Now, if we wish to imitate our holy kings in the fidelity which they displayed in corresponding to the grace of God, let us unhesitatingly follow the star that is meant to guide us on our way.

What is this way, if it be not the narrow path which leads to eternal life?

Let us hasten to enter thereon, and when once we are there, let nothing discourage us or tempt us to go back, but let us walk on steadily and perseveringly, until we have found our Saviour Jesus Christ.

But, alas! we do the reverse of this. Far from paying attention to the workings of grace, far from having our eyes open to perceive the star, far from having the courage to follow its guidance immediately, some shut their eyes on purpose not to see the light, and others put off to another time the carrying out of the good resolutions which it suggests to them.

PÈRE MONTMOREL.  
*Homilies.*

## 25.—On the Infancy and Hidden Life of Our Saviour.

“He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them.”  
—LUKE ii. 51.

PÈRES CROISSET and NOUET, S.J.

IT is surprising that the Son of God, having come on earth simply to glorify His Father by redeeming mankind, should have passed nearly all His life in obscurity.

During all this time could He not have travelled through the world to teach men by His doctrine, to edify them by His example, to convince them by His miracles, and draw them to the knowledge of the true God?

The carpenter's shop, was it a dwelling worthy of a Saviour? A hidden and unknown life, was this to be the life of a Messiah? And so long a retreat, was it necessary for a God made Man?

It must be so, since He who is wisdom itself and does all things with consummate prudence has made the choice. Who is it who had the glory of His Father more at heart than His only-begotten Son? and who knew better than He did how to promote it? The salvation of man, was not that the object of His incarnation? and was He ignorant that the conversion of the universe ought to have been His work?

We must therefore come to the conclusion that a hidden life up to the age of thirty, was more glorious to God than the most striking miracles, and that the work of our salvation required that silence and obscurity during all that time.

What more glorious, what more instructive, than the

mystery of this hidden life? The Eternal Father wished to be glorified by the hidden life of His Son; the Saviour prefers this obscurity to all the marvels of an active life.

Ah! great God, when shall we be convinced that perfection and merit does not consist in doing or in suffering great things for Your glory, but in wishing and doing all that pleases You?

The Saviour glorified His Father quite as much in the poor workshop at Nazareth as He afterwards in Judea did through His preachings and miracles.

O my God, how foolish are they who feel inclined to show their zeal only in performing mighty works of charity! Such as these would say that a hidden life extinguishes fervour.

The will of God is sought for, by those who put their trust in Him; but how many virtues are included in this one! The Son of God was strictly obedient to Mary and Joseph; this is an abridgment of His life, from the age of twelve to thirty years. Would not one say that obedience is above every other virtue? for one cannot doubt but that during that time, Jesus Christ would have possessed every virtue.

Scripture seems to include all in saying, that He was perfectly obedient! Ah! my God, how important is this lesson, but it is not relished! How consoling, my Lord, is Your example; but it is not followed! I have only to obey, and I am sure of pleasing You.

How short is the path to perfection! I have only to obey, and from that time I practise every virtue! A complete victory over the strongest temptations is attached to obedience: we are humble, we are solidly grounded in virtue, when we are obedient.

As for the other wonders which Jesus worked during that time, He has kept them so hidden that we can but have a confused knowledge of them. The finest paintings

are faded when exposed to too much light and air; but a hidden life is always safe, and it is God alone who can help us to it.

To be talked of by the world, to be successful, to be praised, is, for those who seek it, the reward for purely exterior good works. If we wish to possess God as a reward, let us remember that He alone must be our witness.

LE PÈRE CROISET, S.J.

*Retreats.*

The love of solitude and the love of silence are two virtues, of which the Son of God gives us the example in His hidden life. There are two kinds of solitude: the first is, that of the heart, which can be practised, even among the talk and hum of a busy world, by a holy contemplative mind not affected by outward observances; the second is, that of the body, which effectually separates us from the conversation and sight of men; but this will be of little use to us if separated from the first.

Our Saviour has so practised both the one and the other that it ought to induce us to follow His example. See Him in Nazareth, where He leads a hidden life; He is content with a village, a mean-looking house, a vile employment. What conversions could He not effect by the mere efficacy of His word! nevertheless He lives silently, to teach us to love retreat; and this we should never shrink from, when the glory of God, or the salvation of our neighbour, or any pressing want, is concerned.

Try to be fond of retirement, so that you may examine your conscience effectually. You need not be afraid of losing your time or of burying your talents.

Jesus did not lose the fruit of the least of His labours when He began His public life, from having been a recluse until He was thirty years of age.

PÈRE NOUET.

*From "The Man of Prayer."*

## 26.—On the Transfiguration of our Lord.

FATHER DU PONT, S.J.

“And after six days Jesus taketh unto him Peter, and James, and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them.”—MATTHEW xvii. 1, 2.

[LOUIS DU PONT was born at Valladolid on November 11, 1554. He entered the Society of Jesus at the age of twenty-one. In Spain, he is justly considered to be one of the most celebrated masters of the spiritual life, and his Meditations are models of piety and devotion. After a life spent in the performance of good works and mortification, he died in his native city on the 16th of February 1624, aged sixty-one, fifty of which he passed in the Society of Jesus. His life has been written in Spanish by the Jesuit Father Cachupin. His Meditations on the Mysteries, published in 1612 at Cologne, is a book full of unction and instruction. His life of Balthasar Alvarez, one of the saintly directors of the glorious St. Theresa, is intensely interesting.]

THE primary intention of the Saviour in showing Himself clothed with glory, and His face shining as the sun, was to manifest a ray of that glory which He had concealed under the veil of His human body—a happiness He had prepared in His kingdom for all those who should be faithful in His service.

He wished also to urge them to carry the cross, and to teach them that God gives to His saints, even in this world, a foretaste of the delights and joys of the next. Also, that the life of those who follow Jesus is indeed a cross, but a cross accompanied with heavenly consolations and interior joys so sweet that it corresponds with what He himself said, that His yoke is easy and His burden light. After that, should we hesitate to enter into the service of so liberal a Master—we who know that we shall one day partake of His glory, and that perhaps He will give us henceforth a merciful foretaste of the happiness He has prepared for us?

Let us consider for a moment how our Lord and Saviour was transfigured. It was by allowing the beauty of His soul, which He had always concealed, to irradiate and spread itself over His body. No sooner had it appeared than His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow. The evangelist would have said more brilliant than the sun, had there been anything more luminous to which he could have compared it.

But let us offer up a thousand acts of thanksgiving to that Divine Redeemer who, for love of us, has up to now, deprived Himself of that glory so justly His due on this day of His transfiguration. He deemed it right and just to manifest His glory, though only for a short time, in order to be able to finish the work of our salvation.

Could You, my Saviour, have shown me a greater love by depriving Your sacred body of a glory so just, so grand, so legitimate, with the sole view of sacrificing it for me upon the cross?

Oh! why could I not give up every earthly joy for the love of You? for then I should one day be rewarded in Thy abode of glory.

. . . . .

The holy prophets, Moses and Elias, appeared on Mount Thabor clothed in glory and majesty. It may be that their luminous presence contributed to increase the glory of a Saviour whom they acknowledged as their Redeemer, or it may have been to show, that the saints should one day share in the happiness of their Master, inasmuch as they participated in His labours and sufferings on earth.

Who can describe the joy which filled their hearts when they saw before their eyes Him, for whom they sighed for so many ages, with what humility and deference they adored Him as their God, and what thanksgivings did they not offer to Him as their Redeemer?

These holy prophets spoke, says the evangelist, of the excess which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem ; that is to say, of the passion which He had to endure on Mount Calvary, the theatre of His sufferings. Redeemer of mankind, what are You saying to them on this joyful occasion ? What connection can there be between Your passion and Your glory ? If music in mourning is disagreeable (*Eccles.* xxii.), are sad discourses bearable in a time of joy ?

But I see now what it is. Your sweet music is in reference to Your death, because the love You feel for us impels You to find a pleasure in the greatest suffering, and that you wish to teach us by that, that You have never had a moment of repose without some mixture of pain, and that the joys of this life which You have implanted in the hearts of Your faithful servants, are intended to prepare them for many crosses. Again, as he who ardently loves willingly speaks of the object of his affection, so because You, O Lord, loved nothing so much as crosses, You experienced no greater pleasure than to converse on that cross whereon You would soon be nailed for love of us.

. . . . .

The place on which our Saviour was transfigured was a retired spot, suitable for prayer, to show that God does not reveal His glory in public but in a retreat, when we are the better weaned from earthly joys, and are the more likely to reach perfection. Thus Moses and Elias had the happiness of seeing God, not in a crowded city, but on the top of a deserted mountain.

How true it is that it is most important that we should try to love solitude and retirement, that we should raise up our hearts and say with David, "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest ?" (*Ps.* liv.)

LOUIS DU PONT, S.J.

*Meditations.*

## 27.—For Maunday Thursday.

REV. PÈRE HOUDRY, S.J.

"Before the festival day of the pasch, Jesus, knowing that his hour was come, riseth from supper, and, laying aside his garments, and having taken a towel, girded himself. After that, he putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of his disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."—JOHN xiii. 1, 4, 5.

HERE is, my brothers, a spectacle worthy of attracting the attention of a Christian, and to which St. Gregory the Great invites heaven and earth to be a witness of the example which a Man-God gives to all. It is not a light capable of surprising us by its grandeur and magnificence; the pomp and splendour which usually excite our curiosity and attracts our notice have no share here; but it is the mighty which is abased, it is the Sovereign of the universe who is willing to perform the meanest service to poor sinners,—a Master who bends His knee to His disciples. In a word, it is Jesus at the feet of His apostles, in order to wash them with those very hands which had created heaven and earth, and fixed the stars in the firmament above.

This spectacle deserves our admiration because it shows us something grand, rare, and new, on which we should gaze and reverently meditate on a ceremony which is this day carried out and renewed year after year on this day and in every church.

Surprising sight, which shows us the Most High Majesty of the world in the lowest of humiliations!

Oh! wondrous charity! since this Saviour finds nothing



better calculated to win their hearts than by washing of their feet, knowing that He had to give them His own Body as the most precious pledge of His love; but still a sight full of mystery and instruction, as the Saviour says Himself to the first of His disciples, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" (*John* xiii.)

In fact, He gave them the knowledge by explaining what He commanded them to do hereafter; and I dare to say, that it required no less than His example, to lead them to the practice of Christian humility, of which they were as yet, ignorant of its practice and value: "For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do, also" (*John* xiii. 13).

. . . . .

The Son of God had already given a rule of conduct to His disciples, namely, to take the last place without disputing about precedence or rank; but in this mystery, He gives us an example of a deeper humility, for He lowers Himself so as to wash the feet of those, who were not worthy to wash His own; and it would seem that He took upon Himself, as a rule for His humiliations, the eminence of His dignity and rank, which He retains over all His creatures. Ah! I will not hesitate to say, that after that this last place which He takes has really become to be the place of honour, since it is that of a God made man; that a similar humiliation exalts us, since it makes us like unto a God humiliated; and that those acts of humility we practise in imitation of Him, are really glorious actions, since they attract the attention of God and deserve His praise.

After that, a Christian who ought to be convinced of this truth, will he be scrupulous on a point of honour, and will he believe that it is dishonourable to practise Christian humility? Will he be able to excuse himself from per-

forming duties so essential to Christianity on the ground or plea of his merit, his position, his character, or his reputation? Will he blush to serve the poor, or visit the sick in an hospital? Will he feel ashamed to perform similar humiliating duties to which his religion calls him, duties which the example of his God obliges him to perform, since He is the model we ought to imitate?

What a shame rather, for a Christian to be always scrupulous on a point of honour; always ready to wrangle for precedence of rank or honour, resolved to yield to no one, and to hold in contempt those who are beneath him, and thus, at last he will fear to lose his reputation, if he were to follow the example of his Saviour, by practising any act of humility. Ah! unworthy pretext of a Christian, and hurtful to Christianity itself, which is grounded on humility and self-abasement.

PÈRE HOUDRY, S.J.  
*On Christian Morals, &c.*

. . . . .

Moses and Elias, that is to say, the Law and the Prophets, appeared conversing with Jesus, in order that by the presence of these persons should be accomplished what is said in Deuteronomy: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall stand" (*chap. xix. 15*).

Peter, emboldened by the revelation of so many mysteries, full of contempt for all worldly things, raises up his desires and heart to heaven, and, in a holy transport of joy, exclaims, "It is good, O Lord, to be here."

ST. LEO.  
*On the Transfiguration.*

## 28.—The Agony and Passion of Our Lord.

PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J., and  
PÈRE NOUET.

“He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.”—PHILIPPIANS ii. 8.

AN inward grief seized the heart of the Saviour of the world; He walked in silence to the place called Gethsemani, where, finding that His mortal strength succumbed to the extreme anguish of His soul, He was perforce constrained to appeal to His apostles, as if to ask them for some relief. “My soul is sorrowful unto death,” said He, and I feel that I must give way to the sadness coming over Me.

But receiving no consolation from them, He again withdrew apart, not so much to hide His trouble and His fear, as to retreat within Himself.

See Him now in a corner of this garden, how pale He is! how He staggers! how He trembles and falls upon His face! See His face quite wet with tears, His very clothes are saturated with a bloody sweat, which flows in streams upon the ground!

He lifts up His hands and raises His voice to heaven; He twice goes back to His disciples to complain how little He is assisted, and twice returns to His retreat; but no rest, no calm succeeds.

I know not, my brethren, what is your idea, but I confess that this mystery astonishes me, and is beyond all comprehension. When I look upon a God humiliated, a

God sorrowful even unto death, my mind, shallow as it is, has no difficulty in unravelling this enigma; but a God troubled in His soul, struck with fear, and sad even unto death, troubles me exceedingly, and I am lost in thought.

What! this Messiah which God sent down on earth to be our Master and example, this Saviour who has come into the world to suffer; this Saviour who has shown so much impatience to shed His blood for love of us,—now that His hour has come, seems to be wanting in resolution. See Him extended full length upon the earth, bathed in His blood, suffering for three hours a cruel agony, and unceasingly repeating those words, “Let this chalice pass away.”

Oh! my Saviour and my God, the support of the weak, the strength even of the strong,—mighty soul whose generous feelings are so raised above every infirmity of man,—tell us, I beseech Thee, what may be the cause of so keen, so deep a grief; for I cannot really believe that fear alone of that death, which You have taught us to despise, could have caused You so great an agony.

LE PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.

. . . . .

In your mind's eye draw a lively picture of the Passion of Jesus Christ. In this sketch, you can represent the lance which has pierced His heart, the thongs and cords which are so embedded into His flesh that the thorns and nails are steeped in blood.

Surely, if you think of these sad circumstances of His death, and gaze attentively, you must indeed be moved.

Gratitude would compel you to be so; for, having endured so many tortures for your sake, the least you can do is, to compassionate His sufferings. Justice requires it; for if you feel compassion for any of your brethren, what do you not owe to the Son of God, who, through

excess of love, was made man and took His place as your friend and brother? Humanity alone would prompt you; for if you saw the lowest of your fellow-creatures in the condition to which his love for you had reduced him, you surely would have pitied him.

St. Gregory of Nyssa could never see the painting of the sacrifice of Isaac, without shedding tears of compassion and tenderness; for he thought of that innocent victim who laid bare his neck and awaited the death-blow from the hands of his own father. If this so moved his pity, is not the sight of Jesus dying on the cross infinitely more pitiable? *O quantum laboravit sustinens!* exclaims St. Bernard (*Serm. ii.*)

Oh, what sufferings has He not endured! Who could sufficiently appreciate the excessive goodness and mercy which induced Him to bear such a heavy weight of dolours? Cast your eye on His many wounds; see the streams of blood which trickle down; look at His face, so disfigured with spittle, mud, and blood; taste the bitterness of the gall they gave Him to drink; listen to the blows of the heavy hammer as it drives the nail through His tender feet; listen to those loving complaints He sends up to heaven: "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" (*Matt. xxvii.*) to teach you, the excess of those interior griefs which you cannot see or understand!

Remember that He is innocent, that He is the Son of a God who is the God of glory; and if you can gaze on this, His bed of suffering, without weeping for your sins, you must confess that you are unfeeling and hard-hearted.

. . . . .

However great may be our miseries, however painful may be the misfortunes we may have to endure, whether deserved or not, the remedy we find in the cross and sufferings of our Saviour is infinitely greater and more powerful.

One single drop of the blood He shed for us was capable of paying all our debts, sufficient to blot out all our sins, and powerful enough to extinguish all the flames of hell. What would be the value of that deluge of blood which He has poured over us with such profusion? If each drop can save a million of worlds, the whole mass of that precious Blood, will it not be able to save a sinner?

You cannot doubt the efficacy of so potent a remedy, since it is of inestimable value, nor of the sufficiency of your ransom, since what He has given is beyond all price. Every river, when it flows into the sea, loses its name, because, when compared to the mighty ocean, it is as nothing in comparison; and so the greatest sins vanish and disappear when they are drowned in the ocean of divine mercy. And if you doubt this still, you are ignorant of the value of the sufferings and death of the Son of God.

Do you not know that the Apostle says, His blood calls for mercy for every sinner, even to those who have been put to death, and it cries out with so loud and powerful a voice that it drowns the noise and clamour of our sins? Do you not know, in fine, that He "gave himself a redemption for all" (*Timothy ii.*), and consequently that His blood, His sufferings, His death, and His satisfactions are all yours?

Put, then, your trust in Him without troubling yourself about your miseries; avail yourself of His blood, more powerful than that of Abel's; make good use of so powerful a voice, and do not fear that His Father will reject you, but only fear that you yourself will refuse. "See that you refuse him not that speaketh" (*Hebrews xii. 25*).

For if those who rejected Him, when He spoke on earth, have not been able to avoid being punished, so we who reject Him, when He speaks to us of heaven, will have a lesser chance of being saved.

LE PÈRE NOUET.  
*Sur la Passion.*

## 29.—On Jesus Risen.

BOURDALOUE.

“The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men ; and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall rise again.”—MATTHEW xvii. 21, 22.

“He is risen ; he is not here.”—MARK xvi. 6.

THE resurrection of Jesus Christ fully confirms the fact of His divinity.

You will say, perhaps, the Saviour of the world, during His mortal life, surely worked a sufficient number of miracles to prove that He was the Son of God.

Devils cast out, those born blind cured, those, after a death of four days, raised again to life ; were not these so many manifest demonstrations, so many palpable proofs, of the divine power which dwelt within Him ? What need, then, of the more striking proof in His resurrection to confirm this belief ?

I say that the divinity of Jesus Christ was especially attached to His resurrection : “Who was predestinated the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead” (*Rom. i. 4*), Why ? Because the resurrection of the Saviour was the proof which this God-Man had expressly given to the Jews to make them acknowledge His divinity ; because this proof was in fact the most natural, the most convincing of His divinity ; because of all the miracles of Jesus Christ worked by virtue of His divinity, there was not one which had been so incontestably evident as that of His resurrection of His body ; and because it is that of all which has most contributed to the propagation of the faith and to the establishment of the gospel, the substance and main point of which is to believe in Jesus Christ and to confess His divinity.

It is not, therefore, without a reason that Jesus Christ especially insisted on this sign, to make it appear that He was God and the Son of God. In fact, it only appertains to a God to say, as He does, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again" (*John* x. 18). A God alone, I say, would express Himself in this way.

Before Christ came into the world, men were seen who had been raised from death to life, but these were recalled to life, by other men. Eliseus, by the mere breath of his mouth, reanimated the dead body of the Shunamite's son, and through the fervent prayer of Eliseus, the child of the widow of Sarepta, who died of exhaustion and a decay of nature, was restored to his sorrowing mother full of vigour and health.

But, as St. Ambrose remarks, they who were restored to life were so restored through the means of extraordinary virtues, and those who worked these miracles, performed them solely by virtue of given graces.

The unheard-of miracle was, that the same man should have worked a double miracle, namely, that not only of rising from the dead, but of raising Himself from the tomb; and this is what had never been seen or heard of. And this was the miracle which God reserved for His Son, in order to proclaim to the world that He was at one and at the same time, both God and man; man, because He had risen from the dead, and God, inasmuch as He had raised Himself from death to life. *Ut ostenderet quoniam erat in ipso, et resuscitatus homo, et resuscitans Deus*, says that holy doctor, St. Ambrose.

. . . . .

It is true that we shall rise again from the dead, because Jesus Christ is risen again; and in order to crown our hopes, I add, that we shall rise like unto Jesus, and that His resurrection is the model of our own.



For, asks St. Augustine, why had God willed that the resurrection of His Son should have been so obvious, and why was the Son of God so desirous to make it known and to make it public? Ah! answers the holy doctor, it was in order to show us clearly and evidently in His own person the just extent of our pretensions; it is in order to show us what He is, what we ought to be, or what we can become. I have, then, only to represent to myself whatever is most striking, great, and admirable, in the triumph of my Saviour. I have only to contemplate that glorified humanity, that body, material as it is, invested with every spiritual essence, emitting beams of living light, and crowned with an everlasting splendour. Such, then, is the happy state to which I shall one day be raised, and such is the consolatory promise, which faith makes me.

Now, our bodies are subject to corruption and rottenness; now, they are bodies subject to suffering and grief; now, they are weak bodies, and subject to death; now, it is only a lump of flesh, vile and contemptible.

But then, by a quick and most marvellous change, they will have, if I may venture so to speak, the same incorruptibility as a God, the same impassibility, the same immortality, the same subtlety, the same brightness: "Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of his glory" (*Phil.* iii. 21).

All that, nevertheless on one condition, and that is, that we should so labour in the present life, to sanctify them by mortification and Christian penitence. For, if we have indulged these bodies, and afforded them whatever a sensual appetite demanded, and, thereby made them bodies of sin, they will rise, but how? As objects of horror, to the confusion and shame of the soul, to share in her torment, after having participated in her crimes.

BOURDALOUE.  
*On the Resurrection.*

### 30.—On the Sacred Heart and the Five Sacred Wounds of our Lord.

CARDINAL PETER DAMIEN, PÈRE BIROAT, and  
ST. BERNARD.

“ You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains.”

—ISAIAH xii. 3.

[THE BLESSED PETER DAMIEN was born at Ravenna in the year 988. From his childhood he manifested a great love of prayer, which increased with his age. After some years which he devoted to teaching, he retired to the monastery of Sainte-Croix d'Avellane, near to Eugubio, and here he was elected prior, and subsequently abbot, of the community. Pope Stephen X., hearing of his saintly reputation, called him to Rome, and created him Cardinal Bishop of Ostia in 1057, and employed him in important offices at the Sacred Colleges. These offices, Peter Damien continued to fulfil during the reigns of the three succeeding pontiffs, and on the 23d of February 1073, he ended a holy life by a holy death, and is now ranked among the blessed in heaven. Besides Letters, Sermons, &c., he has left us Lives of SS. Odilon, Romuald, and Dominic. An edition of his works was published in Paris in 1663.]

IT is in the adorable Heart of Jesus that we shall find every help for our necessities, every remedy for the cure of our ills, the most powerful assistance against the assaults of our enemies, the sweetest consolation to soothe our sufferings, the purest delight to fill our souls with joy.

Are you in sorrow? Do your enemies persecute you? Does the recollection of your past sins disturb you? Is your heart troubled or full of fear?

Throw yourself, so to speak, in the wounds of Jesus Christ, even into His Sacred Heart;—it is a sanctuary, it is the retreat for holy souls, and a place of refuge wherein your soul is safe.

It is to Him and through Him, that we should ask for all we require; it is through Him and in Him, that we should offer to the Eternal Father all we do, because this Sacred Heart is the treasury of every supernatural gift, the source of every grace.

It is the channel through which we unite ourselves more intimately to God, and through which God communicates Himself more freely.

It is, in fine, to this Sacred Heart we should continually strive to unite ours—no longer wishing to have other desires or sentiments than those of Jesus—and then we may be sure that His will and His Sacred Heart may, so to speak, merge into our heart, and that the two will be as one. Draw waters at leisure out of the Saviour's fountains: you will never exhaust them.

CARDINAL PETER DAMIEN.

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[JAQUES BIROAT was born in the city of Bordeaux. He first entered into the Company of the Society of Jesus, but passed from thence to the contemplative order of Cluny. He became Prior of Beussan, and died in the year 1666.]

St. Bernard calls the wounds of our Saviour fountains of mercy; not only to tell us that He has received them through an extraordinary display of mercy and goodness, but to show us that they are a fresh motive for His Heart to take compassion on us, and that, since He received them He is more alive to our misfortunes, when He remembers that He died for us, and that He sees in the scars of His wounds the proof of His love, and the price of our

salvation. No! He neither wishes to lose the price of His precious blood, nor the objects of His love.

Consequently, what more powerful and efficacious motive can there be for a sinner, who sincerely wishes to repent, than to think of the wounds of the Saviour?

The holy Fathers call these wounds our eyes and our tears—our tears, because they impart an abiding sorrow for sin; our eyes, because we see in these scars, either what our Saviour has done for us or what we have done against Him.

I see a Heart wounded for us and a Heart wounded by us; I see, O God, the wounds which You have received from the hands of the executioners; but I also see the wounds I have made by my own hands, since it is certain every sin I commit, I re-open Your wounds; for so Your prophet makes this reproach to sinners: "They have added to the grief of my wounds" (*Ps. lxxviii.*), as much as to say, I do not complain of My nails or of My thorns; your sins have added new griefs to My first torments and have made wounds which renew and widen the first.

Can we, then, be astonished, if holy penitents have wept bitterly when they looked on the Sacred Wounds of the Saviour? "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face?" (*Ps. cxxxviii.*) This is what the penitent David said: O my God! whither shall I flee so that I may be sheltered from Thy anger and safe from the terror of my sins? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art there; even when I enter into Your Heart, I meet the reflection of Your justice in the alarm my conscience conjures up.

St. Jerome replies to this question and to this perplexity, that it is only in the wounds of the Saviour that we can find this hope: *Ubi tuta firmaque peccatoris permansio, in vulneribus Christi.* These are the sanctu-

aries, where so many sinners have flown for refuge from the just anger of God, and wherein we ought to shelter ourselves, and that for two reasons : firstly, because we see in the depth of His scars a loving readiness to forgive us, and give us comfort ; secondly, because we find in these sacred sources all-powerful testimonies of His mercy and goodness for men, in which we may easily participate, if we only diligently try to make ourselves worthy of His promises.

LE PÈRE BIROAT.

*From Panegyric on St. Thomas.*

. . . . .

The Sacred Heart of Jesus has been wounded in order that by means of the visible wound we may see the invisible wound of His divine love. Who would not love this Heart so wounded for the love of us ? who would not return love for love, to a Saviour who has done so much for us ?

Thy side, O Lord, has been pierced, in order that we should find an entry into Thy Sacred Heart. Oh ! how sweet and good it is, to seek repose in that Heart divine !

From my Saviour's sacred wounds, I find out His Heart's secret : I now can fathom the depths of God's goodness, for the bowels of mercy which caused Him to come down from heaven to dwell with us, are open to me.

ST. BERNARD.

*On the Passion.*

### 31.—On the Mystery of the Cross.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM and ST. AUGUSTINE.

“And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary.”—JOHN xix. 17.

LET no one, my brethren, blush at those sacred and adorable marks of our redemption. The cross of Jesus Christ is the source of every blessing; it is through that we live, through that, we are what we are. Let us carry the cross of Jesus, and adorn ourselves with so glorious a crown. It is the seal and fulfilment of everything which appertains to our salvation.

If we are regenerated in the waters of baptism, the cross is there present; if we approach the table of the Lord to receive His holy Body, it there appears; if we receive the imposition of hands to consecrate us as ministers of God, it is still there; in fact, we see in everything that adorable sign which is, at once, the cause and emblem of our victory.

We have it in our houses, we hang it and paint it on our walls, we engrave it on our doors, and we should ever carry it in our hearts; for the cross is a sacred monument which recalls to memory the work of our salvation, the regaining of our ancient freedom, and the infinite mercy of Jesus Christ.

When, then, you make the sign of the cross on the forehead, arm yourself with a saintly boldness, and reinstall your soul in its old liberty; for you are not ignorant that the cross, is a prize beyond all price.

Consider what is the price given for your ransom, and

you will never more be slave to any man on earth. This reward and ransom is the cross. You should not, then, carelessly make the sign of the forehead, but you should impress it on your heart with the love of a fervent faith. Nothing impure will dare to molest you on seeing the weapon, which overcometh all things.

Be not, then, ashamed of the cross, in order that Jesus Christ be not ashamed of you, when He will come, clothed in the Majesty of His glory, accompanied by this sign of our redemption, which will then shine more brilliant than the sun. Engrave it in your heart, lovingly embrace that which procured the salvation of our souls ; for it is the cross which has saved and converted all the world—it is that which has banished heresy and unbelief, which has re-established truth, which has made a heaven on earth, and which has transformed men into angels. It is by means of the cross that the devils have ceased to appear formidable, and are now only to be despised ; it is through that, that death is now no longer death, but only a long sleep. In fine, it is through the cross, that all our enemies have been conquered.

If you find then any one who says, What ! you worship the cross ? answer him with a tone of voice that betokens firmness : Yes, I do worship it, and shall never cease to do so. If he laugh at you, pity him, and shed tears for his blindness ; and say boldly, We protest before heaven and earth that our glory is in the cross, that it is the source of all our blessings, our every hope, and that it is that which has crowned every saint.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

*On Sixteenth Chapter of St. Matthew.*

. . . . .

All those who belong to Jesus Christ are fastened with Him to the cross. . . A Christian during the whole course of his life should, like unto Jesus, be on the cross. It

would be an act of rashness to descend therefrom, since Jesus Christ did not descend, even when the Jews offered to believe in Him. The time for driving out the nails of His cross was only after death, there is then no time to extract the nails whilst we live,—we must wait until our sacrifice is consummated : *Non est tempus evellendi clavos* (*Aug.* 205).

This cross to which the servant of God is attached, is his glory, as the Apostle said, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Gal.* vi. 14).

This cross, I say, to which the servant of God should be fastened, not for forty days, but for life ; therefore he who looks piously upon it should consider it as a treasure, because it teaches him Christ crucified, and he will despise everything to acquire a knowledge which is only to be learned in the school of the cross.

Formerly, it was looked upon as an object of horror, but Jesus Christ has made it so worthy of respect and veneration that kings and princes have forbidden the punishment of crucifixion to be continued, in order to do honour to those faithful servants, who gloried in a punishment which our Lord and Saviour has so ennobled. And this wood to which the Jews had nailed our Lord, accompanied as it was by so many outrages and insults, has become so worthy of honour, that kings have imprinted it on their foreheads, and in union with the lowest of their subjects they look upon the cross of Jesus Christ, as the ship which will guide and carry them safely into harbour.

So strong sometimes are the storms of life that strength of arm is of no avail, and there is no other means to save us from shipwreck than trusting in the Cross of Jesus Christ by which we are consecrated.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

*From Sermons lxxv. and lxxxviii.*



## 32.—On the Ascension.

PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, PÈRE LE VALOIS,  
and ST. BERNARD.

“And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.”—MARK xvi. 19.

INSTEAD of saying what was uppermost in my mind, why cannot I repeat the discourse which Jesus Christ made to His disciples before His ascension? It would give you more pleasure, and would doubtless be useful for you to hear.

Although I leave you, My dear disciples, to go to My Father, it is nevertheless not without pain that I leave you; whatever glory may await Me in heaven, if your interests were not allied to My own, I could not so readily resolve to separate Myself from you. I came down upon earth when I thought that My presence was necessary; if I ascend to heaven, it is because I know that henceforth I shall be more useful to you when away; independently of this, the Holy Ghost will soon descend and take My place, and you will not long remain unconsoled.

Go, My apostles, go and teach all nations the truths I have taught you; go and undeceive so many poor unfortunates who are steeped in vice and ignorance; do this so effectually, that of all the souls I have redeemed there shall not be found one lost one; fear neither the boasted knowledge of doctors and philosophers, nor the

power of the great ones of the world ; I will give you wherewith, to confound the pride of both one and the other ; it is true you will have to suffer much, but the helps you will receive from Me, will soften and sweeten every pain. Go, then, and merit the rich crowns I am going to prepare for you.

The apostles and disciples did not long enjoy the pleasure of hearing Him ; for the Saviour having raised His hand to give them His final blessing, He began to rise, and soon was lost among the clouds.

. . . . .

If the father of the prodigal son testified so much joy, and made so grand a feast for a son, who had not only dishonoured him ; but had been the disgrace of all his kindred, by having squandered his property in shameful debaucheries, what must have been the welcome which the Eternal Father gave to His only Son, who, to please Him, was worn out with the fatigues of a poor and suffering life ; a Son, who, to increase the glory of His Father, zealously bore the most cruel torments ; an innocent Son, who has saved so many sinners, and who, by His death, has opened the way to heaven to all mankind ?

It was then, that this God of Majesty acknowledged Him for His Son, that He announced to all the celestial choir that He was their King, that all should bend to His authority and be submissive to His power, that He should be the Master of the heaven He had opened, of the hell that He had overcome, and of the earth that He had sanctified.

We can easily believe that all the happy spirits cried out, " The Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction " (*Apoc.* v.)

The Lamb who has suffered death, is worthy to receive divine honours, to rule with strength, with wisdom, with

absolute authority; it is right that we should treat Him with homage and respect, that He should be raised to the highest pinnacle of glory, and that all heaven should ring and re-echo His praises for ever and for ever.

It was at the sound of this welcome, that the Son of Man was introduced into heaven, where no man had before been seen, and where that numerous band of saints He had delivered from Limbo followed Him, and were received with all the honours that were due to the merits of their Redeemer and to their own merits too.

LE PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.  
*Sermon on the Ascension.*

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[LOUIS LE VALOIS was born at Melun in 1639. He was appointed confessor and director of the grandsons of Louis XIV., and was always esteemed, as a true servant of God. He died in Paris, 1700. His Spiritual Works were published in Paris, 1785, in three volumes. His ascetical treatises are full of instruction and devotion.]

It is not solely for Yourself, Lord, that You re-enter into Your kingdom; it is for us You ascend, as our Chief, and You go, according to the promise You have made, to prepare for Your elect the mansions which are destined for them; You ascend as our Mediator, and for us, You present to Your Father the fruits of that superabundant redemption which has reconciled heaven and earth; You ascend as our Guide, and in showing us the boundary to which we ought to reach, You trace the road on which we ought to walk.

Adorable Master of that militant Church which You have established on earth, by the labours of Your mortal life, give us a share in the glory of that Church triumphant which You begin to collect in heaven, and of which You will be the everlasting happiness. We are Your members, and wheresoever the general is to be found, there also should be his soldiers.

Without You, without the hope and happiness of possessing and seeing You, what peace could we enjoy in this valley of tears wherein we dwell? And what can the world offer in comparison with that heavenly beatitude, which reigns in You and with You?

Ah! dear Lord, when will the day come, when I shall bid farewell to this place of banishment? When will You appear to me in all Your glory? I languish in expectation; the world to me is now as nothing, and my heart is already with You in heaven.

LE PÈRE LE VALOIS.  
*Entretien sur l'Ascension.*

. . . . .

The Ascension is the glorious terminus of the voyage of the Son of God.

My brethren, let us follow the Lamb wheresoever He goes; let us follow Him suffering with patience; let us follow Him rising; let us follow Him still more eagerly when He ascends to heaven; and let us raise up our hearts to God the Father, in whom His glory reigns.

ST. BERNARD.  
*On the Assumption.*

### 33.—On the Descent of the Holy Ghost.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM and L'ABBÉ FLECHIER.

“But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things.”—JOHN xiv. 26.

THE apostles left the supper-room in Jerusalem filled with the Holy Ghost. They had within them, a treasury of knowledge—stores of graces and spiritual gifts, which they could distribute throughout the land; and they went to preach to all nations, having become a living faith, and, like so many books, animated by the grace of the Holy Ghost.

This is why they announce, with such a marvellous certainty, mysteries of which the old philosophers had no conception, and they publish them not to fifteen or twenty persons, but to cities and to the entire populace, to Greeks, to barbarians, in inhabited towns and in the middle of the deserts.

But more than this, they announce and preach to men a doctrine far above human intelligence. They speak of nothing terrestrial, but only of the things of Heaven. They preach a state and kingdom of which they never heard before. They disclose other riches and another poverty, another liberty and another slavery, another life and another death, a new world and quite a new mode of life—in fact, a complete change and renewal of everything.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.  
*On St. Matthew's Gospel.*

Scarcely had the Saviour opened heaven to take His place at the right hand of His Father than He re-opens it, to give a share to His disciples—if not of His majesty and glory, at least a share of the abundance of His graces.

Being unable to descend to them, and unwilling that they should ascend to Him, He sends them another Self to console and instruct them, to protect and sanctify them.

Thus the Church finds itself, happily situated between Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, drawn by the one, conducted by the other. They divide between them, says St. Bernard, the office and employment of their love for our salvation. Jesus dwells in the abode of His glory, and acts as our Intercessor and everlasting Mediator near His Father; the Holy Ghost dwells in our midst, to be our consoler and ruler. One prepares in heaven, the crowns He has destined for the elect; the other encourages them and gives them strength to fight bravely.

The one has entered into the depth of the sanctuary, to consummate the functions of His priesthood; the other, fashions here below spiritual and holy victims. The one, high in heaven, carries man to the bosom of God, to give him a certain pledge of his glory and of his blessed immortality; the other, sent from heaven, brings God down to the bosom of man, in order to cleanse him and fill him with light and grace: this is the mystery which the Church celebrates on this, our Whitsuntide.

. . . . .

The Holy Ghost is sent to bear testimony to the person, divinity, and doctrine of Jesus Christ; He bears testimony of His birth, for by virtue of His power He formed His adorable body in the womb of a Virgin.

He bears testimony of His death, by manifesting its efficacy; of His glory, He is the pledge; of His charity, He is the dispenser; of His truth, He is the witness

*par excellence*. "It is the Spirit," says St. John, "which testifieth that Christ is the truth," and that everything, excepting Jesus, is falsehood, adds St. Augustine.

What is this world which the Gospels so often condemn, but a union of vanity and falsehood? Its pleasures are illusions, its promises are trifling amusements; its caresses, treasons; its joys, mere follies; its sadness, despair; its maxims, nought but errors; its laws, unruly; its good works, hypocrisy.

Such is the spirit of the world; but the Spirit of Jesus Christ is truth itself. Its promises are faithful, its hopes are certain, its laws are just, its works are holy, its joys are solid; and all that He is, all that He says, all that He does, all that He ordains, forms a body immutable, holy, and everlastingly true, and of this the Holy Spirit testifieth as well as that of His doctrine.

FLECHIER.  
*Sermon on Feast.*

### 34.—On the Most Holy Trinity.

PÈRE HOUDRY and  
PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

“And there are three who give testimony in heaven—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are one.”—1 JOHN v. 7.

ALL the passages in the Old Testament where the divinity of the Son of God and of the Holy Ghost is established equally, teach the truth of the mystery of the most Holy Trinity.

In Isaiah, the Son of God does He not bear, even after His Incarnation, the name of God strong and powerful, the Father of Eternity ? In the Psalms the Lord has said, “This day have I begotten thee” (*Ps. ii.*) “The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand” (*Ps. cx.*), words of which the Saviour himself made use of, in order to confound the Jews, and from which He has extracted from them a proof of His divinity. With regard to the Holy Ghost, is not His divinity also declared in several passages of the Old Testament, where He is called the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of God, and which make Him appear at one time as the author of the fertility of all nature : “And the Spirit of God moved over the waters” (*Gen. i.*) ; at another time as the author of all the grandeurs and beauty which is seen in the heavens ?

God, says the holy man Job (*Job xxvi.*), has ornamented the heavens by His Spirit ; and at another time



as the author of the sanctification of men, and the source of grace, and their salvation.

But with all that, it must be confessed that the revelation made of the mystery of the Holy Trinity in the Old Testament, is obscure in comparison with what has been revealed to us in the New, where the Three Divine Persons have been so distinctly traced out, and so clearly proposed to our faith, as being not only the chief end, but the principal object of our adoration.

First of all, what is more clear than the manifestation which was made at the baptism of the Saviour, where the heavens open to make us notice and distinguish at the same time these Three Divine Persons: the Father in this voice: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (*Matt.* xvii.); the Son in that Man-God marked and pointed out in that voice; the Holy Ghost under the form of a dove visibly descends on the Saviour?

Secondly. Are not the heavens opened for us in giving testimonies, and to make us acknowledge, with St. John, that there are Three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and that these Three are One (1 *John* vi.)? The Father, has He not opened the heavens, and has He not made His voice heard both on Mount Thabor and on the River Jordan: *Paterna vox audita est*? The Son, has He not opened the heavens, to show Himself at the stoning of St. Stephen? and this proto-martyr, has he not had the joy and happiness of seeing Him sitting on the right hand of His Father, and this, too, when he was in bodily suffering? The Holy Ghost, has He not also opened the heavens to manifest Himself to men, when He descended brilliantly and visibly in the form of parted tongues as it were of fire, and sat upon every one of the apostles; and then to the Gentiles even, and that for several times, and "the apostles began

to speak with divers tongues," and accompanying this with the gift of working many miracles?

Besides these, to be convinced that these witnesses from heaven are only One, we need only read in the New Testament, the striking proofs of the divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost, so often, so clearly expounded; in addition to this, those three words of Jesus in the Gospel include the whole of this doctrine: *Ego et Pater unum sumus* (*John x.*)

LE PÈRE HOUDRY, S.J.

. . . . .

Does the darkness of this mystery weaken our faith? Can we question or doubt of what God teaches us, because we cannot understand it? This is not the opinion of the holy fathers, nor of the doctors, who sustain that there can be no faith without obscurity.

What would be the merit and virtue of faith, says St. Leo, if it merely consisted of believing self-evident truths? Would it be making a great sacrifice to God if, by following His judgment, it would agree with our own; or if we recognise truths which it would be folly to deny? Would it not be treating our Lord in the most insolent and unworthy manner, even in a worldly point of view, were we to ask Him for a reason for all He said, and rather than wishing to believe His word, we should defy Him, or rather require Him to give palpable proofs of all that He has deigned to reveal?

What rashness and boldness, to determine to submit to the judgment of reason only, thus wishing to place that weak ray of intelligence, which God has given us, in opposition to that infinite abyss of splendour, which enlightens everything, and which cannot be fathomed.

O eternal and immutable Truth, You have revealed to Your Church the adorable mystery of the Trinity, and

have commanded all the faithful to believe what **You** have revealed; and a petty mind, whose views are so narrow and confined, ignorant of the commonest things, easily disturbed, daily deceived in the discussion of trifling affairs, ever in want of being led, redressed, and corrected daily—this poor weak mind, I say, will dare to examine into the decrees of his Creator, and will deliberate if he ought to add faith to his opinions, because he cannot comprehend it!

O my God! I confess that I can understand nothing of this great mystery, that it far surpasses my intelligence; but nevertheless I firmly believe, all that **You** have said, although my senses are opposed to my belief, although my weak reason seems to fight against it, although I have no other proof than **Your** word.

I feel so certain of the truth of this divine mystery that I do not hesitate to found on this belief every hope of my eternal happiness.

This mystery is incomprehensible, and must be adored with an unreasoning belief.

LE PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.

### 35.—On Devotion to Our Blessed Lady.

HENRI-MARIE BOUDON, Archdeacon of Evreux,  
and ST. BERNARD.

“From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”  
—LUKE i. 48.

*Extracts from the saintly HENRI-MARIE BOUDON, Archdeacon of Evreux. See his work on the “Devotion to Our Immaculate Mother.”*

THERE is no nation, no state or condition, which has not called Mary “Blessed.” Pagans, Greeks, barbarians—the noble, the rich, and the poor—have honoured her, have invoked her aid. Angels, men, heaven, and earth have striven to show her their respect and homage.

Certainly a devotion must be good, when it is so universal a practice among the faithful; and if St. Augustine makes use of the uniformity and extent of the belief of all Catholic nations as a proof that they must belong to the true Church, it is also an evident proof of the solidity and holiness of devotion to our Blessed Lady to see the universal piety of the faithful.

There are millions who daily implore her motherly protection; an innumerable number of zealous voices call upon us to share in their devotion; the Holy Spirit of God, encourages men of every condition of life in every nation.

We may safely say that heaven resounds with her glory, and the universe re-echoes its praises. All nations who adore God, pay honours to the wonders done to her:

Europe, Asia, Africa, America, have all been struck with astonishment at the "great things that He that is mighty hath done to her."

It must not be supposed that the devotion to the Blessed Virgin is merely a devotion practised by simple or ignorant people; crowned heads have considered it a great honour to be devoted to her, and to acknowledge her as their Lady and their Queen.

The canticle, which says in a general way "All generations shall call me blessed," does not seek any blind submission to our faith; to believe it, does not call for any stretch of imagination; it needs only to be seen. Even at first sight, it is apparent that what the Blessed Virgin foretold, has long been accomplished. So many monuments raised to her honour, so many churches consecrated in her name, so many hands busy in writing her praises, so many preachers glad to eulogise her virtues—all these form, so many authentic testimonies to the truth of her prophecy.

Here you see the happiness of the ever Blessed Virgin universally acknowledged.

Oh! what a consolation it is for me, when I think of the many honours you, my dearest Mother, have received in every part of the world, where the Gospel has been preached or where your Son is adored! What a joy it is, when I read of the many sanctuaries that have been consecrated to your honour and glory! of the many feasts that the Church has set apart for you! of the many holy confraternities, military orders, and religious communities that honour you with an especial worship and are consecrated to your service!

Since we have spoken of monarchs who have done much to spread the devotion to the Blessed Virgin, do not let us forget that glorious St. Louis the Just, who solemnly consecrated himself, his kingdom, and his subjects to this

Queen of Heaven; and who, to give a striking proof of his love for her, placed his crown and sceptre on the altar of Notre-Dame in Paris, and left especial directions that an annual commemoration of this event should be made in all the churches of France on the feast of her glorious Assumption. This his successor, Louis the Great, ratified and confirmed by an additional decree, in which he beseeches every prelate of his kingdom to exhort his people to cherish a fervent love for, and to practise an especial devotion to, the holy Mother of God.

The whole Christian world has, throughout all ages, shown its devotion to the Blessed Virgin; and this devotion has been authorised by a great number of miracles, which are so many illustrious and striking testimonies which God permits, approves, and draws from it His own glory. Not only the holy fathers and doctors, but the whole Church, have exerted themselves, to pay her due honour and proclaim aloud her praises, and this the Church has always done; whilst, on the other hand, the baneful spirit of heresy has ever tried to cloud the glory of Mary. So many grand and glorious treatises have been written on this subject, that it would be difficult to enumerate the books that have been published respecting this devotion.

The holy Fathers, and St. Bernard in particular, reply to those who complain of these multitudes of books, that were all men forced to speak or write of this devotion they never could say enough.

From this we must come to the conclusion that devotion to the Blessed Virgin is really the devotion of the Church; and this is nevertheless certified by the particular care it takes to honour her, and by the praises it bestows upon her. In fact, its attention is quite pointed in this respect: it not only does honour to her mysteries, and celebrates her feasts with great solemnity, but, as if all these solemnities were not sufficient to satisfy its devotion, it sets

apart one day in the week, to be consecrated to her memory.

But above all, the miracles which God has worked and still works daily, in favour of this devotion, evidently proves that Mary should be honoured in every age and by all the faithful, God being unable to work miracles to authorise error or impiety.

Besides; when I speak of miracles, I speak of incontestable miracles, supported by an authority which it would be rash to challenge, such as those which are approved by ecclesiastical powers after a careful and strict examination, or those which we gather from the testimony of authors celebrated for their wonderful learning and rare sanctity.

Some have been related even in councils, as in the Second Council of Nicæa. This sufficiently denotes, that it is very useful to speak of them, to write about them, to preach about them, when they are legitimately approved of; and this the Church has done in general councils.

HENRI-MARIE BOUDON.

*On the Devotion to the Mother of God*

. . . . .

If you follow Mary, you will not swerve from the right path; if you pray to her, you will not fall into despair; if she holds you, you will not fall; if she protects you, you need not fear; if she leads you, you will never weary; and if she befriends you, you will be safe.

ST. BERNARD.

*De Aquæ Ductu.*

### 36.—On the Immaculate Conception.

PÈRES HOUDRY and DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.,  
and ST. BERNARD.

“The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything from the beginning.”—PROVERBS viii. 2.

IN this mystery it seems to me to be fitting and proper to apply those words of the prophet, “The unspotted mirror of God’s majesty” (*Wisdom* vii. 26), to our Lady’s Immaculate Conception.

These words have been applied to the Uncreated Wisdom, that is to say, to the Word Incarnate, who is the substantial image of His Father and the mirror of His divine perfections, because He is begotten in a splendour more pure and brilliant than the light. They, however, can be applied in a just proportion to the glorious Virgin, since Mary was conceived without sin, exempt from its original stain, destined to be the Mother of a Son, who is as far removed from sin, as light is from darkness; consequently, Mary can be rightly called an unspotted mirror. Her conception also corresponds with the eternal and temporal conception of that God-Man, who is to be her Son, and also represents perfectly the sanctity, purity, majesty, and the noblest attributes of God himself.

To show that the conception of Mary, is this unspotted mirror which the wise man has pictured in the eternal conception of the Divine Word, the following reasoning would suffice:—God was not willing, nor would He allow



that the body of the Blessed Virgin should be more pure or more exempt from every stain than her soul. Now the purity of her body has been the most perfect that can be imagined; it equalled, nay surpassed, those of the angels, and, if we may believe some of the early Fathers, it reached even to the infinite. Then, far from having contracted the least stain of sin, she was truly an unspotted mirror.

That God should have willed that Mary's body should not be endowed with a more excellent purity, than that of her soul, is not what could reasonably be expected of His wisdom, since the soul is the noblest part of man.

If the body, according to the expression of the Apostle, is a beautiful vase, the soul is the most precious of liquors which ought to fill it; and consequently the virginal body of Mary, whose purity surpassed that of angels and near unto God, as St. Bernard says, had to contain a soul still more pure, inasmuch as the purity of the body, without the purity of the soul, can have no value or consideration with God.

Oh! great God, could it have been indeed possible that You, who had taken so much pains to endow a purity of body to her, whom You had chosen to be Your Mother, and at the same time allowed her soul to be soiled with a stain as infamous as that of original sin; that the one should be purer than the light of the stars, and the other more vile than the slime of which the first man was formed; that the purity of the one, should have been capable of bringing You from heaven to earth, and that the defilement of the other, would have discouraged You from coming down; and, in conclusion, that the woman whom You had chosen for Your Mother, should have been, even for a moment, a slave of the devil?

No, I cannot believe it. You have too great a horror of sin, even to tolerate the shadow; You love innocence and holiness too much to consent to be born of a sinner, and

to give an apparent opportunity of accusing You on a subject of which You are so sensitive.

LE PÈRE HOUDRY, S.J.

. . . . .

There is something in Mary, which moves and affects me much more than this privilege of having been exempt from original sin—something which adds additional lustre to this first prerogative. Mary received this grace from the very first moment of her conception; it was a wondrous gift; but what appears to me to be still more wonderful, is, that she kept this grace, until the last moment of her life, as pure, as entire, as when she first received it—no sin, no imperfection, no weakness, no surprise, have ever done her harm.

It is a wonder to see water springing from the bosom of the earth as clear, as fresh, as if it fell from heaven; but it is a thing unheard of, that this same water from the well, after having bedewed the fields and dirty places, should flow at last into the sea, without a taint of smell, as unpolluted, as when it issued from the spring.

This is, however, what our Blessed Lady has done. She lived in this valley of tears for more than sixty years—this, too, in the midst of the same sins and occasions of sins, which corrupt daily even innocent souls—without ever losing the purity of her heart. Her humility and patience were put to proofs without a parallel, and she gained fresh lustre from every trial. The Holy Ghost gave her the preference among the many virgins without losing her honour; she had her joys, but she had her dolours too, and through these, she never lost for a single moment, the peace and tranquillity of her soul.

Let us contrast ourselves with this holy and immaculate Mother. She received grace with life, and, what is more glorious still, she kept it intact until she died.

And we, alas! have been conceived and brought into the world in sin; and we have received the grace of the Sacrament of Baptism, which made us friends of God.

But, what is more lamentable, we lose the benefit of this grace, almost as soon as we have received it, and then pass the remainder of our days, in the dread uncertainty of forgiveness. For it must be confessed, to our shame, that we for the most part remain in a state of grace so long as we are unacquainted with sin.

It seems to me that there may be a contradiction between innocence and reason, and that they may clash together, unless they are kept asunder.

LE PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.

. . . . .

All men are conceived in sin, and we do not read of any one who was sanctified in his mother's womb, excepting Jeremias and St. John the Baptist; although there is no doubt that the Blessed Virgin, enclosed in her mother's womb, should have been purified by a much more sublime degree of sanctification, seeing that she was to be the sanctuary where God the Son was to be made Flesh.

ST. BERNARD.

*On Nativity of St. John the Baptist.*

### 37.—On the Nativity of Mary.

PÈRE VERJUS.

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root."—ISAIAH xi. 1.

[ANTOINE VERJUS descended from a rich and noble family ; he was brother of the Count of Crecy, and was born in Paris in 1652. Despising all the world's honours and dignities, he joined the Society of Jesus, and this zealous missionary died in 1706. He wrote a life of St. Francis Borgia, which, although considered a little diffuse, is nevertheless esteemed. He translated the Catechism of the Blessed Canisius, S.J., and also wrote a life of Nobletz, a Breton missionary. Père Verjus had another brother, who was Bishop of Grasse.]

IT seems to be just and reasonable, that the Church should celebrate a great feast on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin ; for one may say, with St. Augustine, that this day is the natal day of the Redemption of mankind. The Church looks upon this Virgin as the powerful and beneficial morning star, which arises for the benefit of the world—like a beautiful orb which begins to shine in the midst of the dreadful turmoil of the universe, which begins to calm the storm, dissipate the darkness, and promises to guide us safely into port.

She looks upon her as the blessed Aurora which is to be soon followed by the Sun of justice, to enlighten every nation by the glory of her graces.

In reality, the birth of Mary is a glorious pledge of the reconciliation of the Creator with the creature ; it is a sure sign of God's mercy for us ; it is assuredly a precious omen of our salvation.

The new-born Virgin is, so to speak, a mysterious rainbow formed by the clouds of nature and the light of grace

which God brings forth to assure us that henceforth **it is** His will to change the deluge of His wrath into the **gentle** rain of grace and benediction.

It is, then, most proper that the Church should rejoice greatly on this her natal day, and she wishes that we should render unto Mary due honours and gratitude.

It was the birth of the Holy Virgin that the chosen people had expected for ages, that the prophets had foretold with joy, for which the saints of the Old Testament had sighed with so much fervency.

We have almost a right to believe that the angels—in token of the joy of heaven—brought down the news to Joachim and St. Anna, since the parents of Isaac, Samson, and St. John the Baptist had received a similar favour.

It need not be doubted, but that the news may have been accompanied by numerous marvels throughout the land, that in a short time there would be a mighty and glorious change. What a motive for joy for the world when it sees that come forth, which was to give it its Saviour, Redeemer, and its King! What a subject for wrath for the devils when they see that beautiful star of Jacob arise, of which one of their prophets had even threatened them. “A star shall rise out of Jacob,” says Balaam in the book of Numbers, xxiv. 17.

They took her for a fatal comet which foretold the ruin of their empire and the end of their tyranny.

It is true that Mary is still a weak child, to whom nature has but given sobs and tears, in order to bewail the miseries of a life into which she enters, and in this respect she is inferior to the angels who enjoy eternal happiness.

But she is destined to bear in her bosom, He whom the heavens and earth cannot contain; she is chosen to give birth to that God, on whom the Seraphim cannot gaze

without trembling. It is this that places her infinitely higher than all the choirs of angels, and it can be said of her as was said of her Son : " Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they " (*Hebrews* i. 4).

Yes, this sacred quality of Mother of God to which she is destined raises her, above all that is glorious in the nature of all the celestial choir.

Also it is from this beauteous title of Mother of God that she derives all the advantages and inherits the grandeur of being above all other creatures, and it is with this view, that God causes her to be born this day.

Of every outward blessing which the world calls fortune, the Blessed Virgin was almost entirely destitute. She was not born in a fine palace, neither was she clothed in purple ; she did not make her entry into the world under a canopy ; around her bed you did not see a crowd of officers and servants.

She was born lowly and obscure. She begins the lessons which her divine Son would finish in the crib at Bethlehem. She teaches us to despise the vanities of the world, since man in his cradle is more miserable and prouder than all animals. She plainly tells us that outward pomp and fine clothing, serves only to feed our pride without decreasing our misery.

Oh ! how well does poverty sit on the Mother of that God-man, who by His humility will overthrow the pride of the devil ; who by His nakedness, weakness, and poverty will shame the vanity of the world, with its luxuries and superfluities !

The riches of our Lady are all in her soul. " All the glory of the King's daughter is within " (*Psalms* xlv. 14). It is within her that God shows His generosity ; it is therein, He has displayed all the treasures of His grace.

VERJUS.  
*Panegyriques.*

## 8.—On the Holy Name of Mary.

PÈRE D'ARGENTAN.

“And the virgin's name was Mary.”

—LUKE i. 27.

WHO is it who, having loved and honoured the holy name of Mary, has not experienced what St. Ephrem has written on it with so much fervour?

That it is really the heavenly star which shines through the surrounding darkness; how often has it not made us think more of God and our duties; that it is truly the harbour of refuge, wherein those who are threatened with danger can take shelter therein. How often, when violently tempted by the evil one, have we not been strengthened by invoking the name of Mary; for is not Mary the *Federis Arca* and our *Mediatrix*?

Many and many a time has not Mary, through her powerful intercession, made our peace with God, whom we have so often offended by our repeated falls, that she is the help of the afflicted and the consolation of the wretched?

We could fill volumes, were we to quote instances of all those who, finding themselves wellnigh wrecked with sadness and grief, have found a safe port by invoking the name of Mary. Would you see people constantly crowding to places which are consecrated to God under this holy name, if they did not find that those who invoke it, are relieved from all human miseries?

And why should not this holy name be so salutary, since it is so nearly allied to the Saviour? Whosoever speaks of Mary speaks of the Mother of the Redeemer, speaks of a priceless treasure, which encloses within itself the infinite wealth of the Father of mercies, and the remedy for every ill.

God wishes that these graces should come through Mary, and He has made her *Mediatrix Nostra*, our *Mediatrix*.

Would you, then, know what a host of graces are enclosed in the name of Mary, look what a treasure of heavenly riches, God has enclosed in her chaste womb.

. . . . .

Who amongst us, if he could see the sacred persons of Jesus and His holy Mother, would not immediately throw himself at their feet, and after embracing them would not pour out his heart to them?

It is true that we can have no longer their bodily presence, now that death has deprived us of both one and the other; but have we not a consolation near at hand? Can we not, in the place of their visible presence, invoke their names, impress them on our memory, engrave them in our hearts, pronounce them often with respect and love?

Indeed, we know that the old philosophers believed that names were but the representation of things, that they recalled to mind the idea and form, and that men had invented their use in order that we might, in a certain way, place persons before our eyes, discuss with them on matters we know, or have known, notwithstanding the length of distance or the question of time.

By this innocent artifice, means have been found of producing everything by means of words and phrases, in imitation of the first being, which brought forth His own image, that is to say, His Word.

We also give to things a new being; we recall persons



who are near or who are far off. The tongue and speech form a picture to the ears of things which we cannot see; we draw them from the tomb; we recall them from ages long passed away; we summon them to life when we will.

In a word, by the means of names, we have found out the way of immortalising everything; we give them a species of being, over which memory or death have no empire.

Who will, then, prevent you from making use of this holy artifice with regard to two persons whose names ought to be dearer to us than anything else in this world, I mean those of Jesus and Mary?

Should we not have their blessed names ever on our lips? Such would be the case if we had them deeply engraven on our hearts.

Fill us, Holy Mary, with the love of your holy name; fill us with the fire of divine love. At the sound of your name, my conscience will awaken, my love will be set on fire.

Mary! O name so many times attacked, but always victorious, ever glorious! Mary! O name always beneficial to my soul, which tranquillises my fears, which helps me in my trouble! Every day will I pronounce it, and to it, I will add the sacred name of Jesus. The Son will remind me of the Mother, and the Mother will remind me of the Son.

Those sacred names of Jesus and Mary, I will engrave upon my heart, and when I breathe my last sigh those names will be ever on my lips, and will be names of blessing and salvation.

LE PÈRE D'ARGENTAN (Capuchin).  
*Grandeurs de la Vierge.*

### 39.—On the Presentation of Mary in the Temple.

PÈRE HOUDRY, S. J.

“Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God.”

—HEBREWS x. 9.

IF angels and men could have mingled all that was virtuous and holy—if they could have gathered together every grace, merit, and perfection, they could not have given to God a more acceptable offering, than was made on the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin to the Temple.

Yes! it must be confessed, O Lord, before your divine Son had come into the world and was made a victim for our sins on the Cross, Mary alone was deemed worthy of being an acceptable sacrifice.

The blood of oxen and sheep, the pouring out of liquors, and the perfume of spices, were things too material to please You; the sacrifices of Abel, Noah, and other patriarchs; the magnificence of David, and the holy profusion of Solomon, well deserved Your favourable notice; but all these, were incapable of fully satisfying You.

It is true that Abraham and Isaac gained Your affection, the one, willing to sacrifice his only son, the other submissively agreeing to be immolated for Your glory. I know that You graciously accepted the offering which Manuel made to You of Samson, and also that of Anne when she presented her little Samuel to You.

But however excellent these victims may have been, they nevertheless have slight blemishes, and failed in possessing

that perfect purity, without which they could not be worthy of You.

There was only Mary, in whom You found no stain of sin, or, rather, there was no one but Mary, who could have been a victim, sufficiently holy and pure, to supply for the defects of others, and to fill in what was wanting in them to appease You, namely, the anticipation of the glorious sacrifice of the cross.

Receive, then, this innocent dove which is to be soon followed by the spotless Lamb. Receive the lamentations of the one, and then You will receive the blood of the other. Receive the vows of the holiest of creatures; receive the offering of a virgin who is to be the Mother of a God, and then You will receive the sacrifice of God made Man.

We ought certainly believe that Mary does not enter into the Temple by compulsion, neither should we imagine that she entered therein, in obedience to the will of her parents. Charity presses her on more strongly than the obligation she was under to fulfil her vows, and had they not presented her, she would have been drawn thither solely by her immense love.

She had long sighed for this happiness, and in the transports of her fervour she said repeatedly to herself: When shall I be enclosed in that sacred Temple, where God has fixed His dwelling, and where He has fixed mine? Dear Lord! do not delay to grant me the possession of that happiness, the postponement of which causes me such painful longing. "These things I remembered and poured out my soul in me; for I shall go over to the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God" (*Psalms* xli. 5).

At length the happy day having arrived, do not ask me if she was transported with joy. Far from waiting for the hands of her parents to prepare herself for the fulfil-

ment of their vows, she was the first to warn them and to urge them onwards.

It was wonderful indeed, to see a child of three years endowed with so firm a resolve—to see her leave the comforts of home without a sigh—to forego the caresses of her relations—to bid adieu to her dearest companions—to tear herself away from the arms of a father who loved her more than his eyes, and of a mother for whom she had the tenderest affection;—all these, she resigns with tears of joy.

Picture to yourself the feelings of Joachim and Anna when they approached the High Priest in order to place their daughter in his arms; how their souls are troubled with a divided love—one a love divine, the other a human love. Joachim, who has for so many years been ignorant of the sweet name of father, and who now would soon be deprived of his darling pet; Anna, she, too, venerable in age and piety, after a barrenness of years had now become the happiest of mothers—she too, was on the point of losing all her joy and comfort. Joachim sighed and sobbed, and Anna shed tears of grief.

But the generous Virgin is unmoved. She sees the tears her parents shed, she hears the sighs without a sign of weakness, their sobs she listens to, without shaking her courage. She knows full well that these dear ones are well-nigh heart-broken, but grace is working within her, and a love much stronger is growing now, for God calls the Blessed Virgin to His service. She thinks not of a father's tenderness, she heeds not a mother's love; she knows and looks to God alone, to whom she wishes to sacrifice herself.

LE PÈRE VINCENT HOUDRY, S.J.  
*From his MSS. Discourses.*

## 40.—On the Annunciation.

BOURDALOUE and ST. GREGORY.

"Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee."

—LUKE i. 28.

### *Extracts from Bourdaloue's Two Sermons on the Annunciation.*

AN angel presented himself to Mary, and she was troubled. Scarcely had he begun to speak to her than fear seized her, so that she felt within her a host of perplexing thoughts: "She was troubled at his saying, and thought within herself, what manner of salutation this should be" (*Luke* i. 29).

If Mary had been one of those worldly persons, who are only virgins in body, but not so in spirit, this visit she received would not have surprised her much, and the praises bestowed upon her, instead of astonishing her, would have agreeably flattered her. But the profession she had made as a virgin was undertaken solely with the view of devoting herself entirely to God; the rules which had been prescribed had been strictly kept, which were to renounce the manners and customs of a profane age; her exact and severe regularity, her attention never to relax in the least duty, the preservation of an irreproachable conduct which was proof against the slightest censure, the modesty and bashfulness which were with her supernatural; the opinion she had formed that praises bestowed on her sex and favourably received,

that praises even tolerated and quietly listened to, were to her a secret and contagious poison;—all these caused her a trouble which she was not ashamed of showing; because being troubled in that way, she manifested the true character of a virgin faithful to God.

On Mary's answer depended the accomplishment of this glorious mystery. This consent was, in the order of the eternal decrees of God, one of the conditions required for the Incarnation of the Word; and this is the essential obligation we are under to this Queen of virgins, since it is of faith that it is through her, that Jesus Christ has been given to us, and it is to her, we are indebted for this Divine Saviour. For if the Son, even of God, descends from His glory in heaven; if He enters into the chaste tabernacle of Mary to be made flesh, it is at the moment she has said, and because she has said it, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word" (*Luke i. 28*).

. . . . .

It is not in consequence of this answer and consent of Mary that the Son of God came down from heaven and became Incarnate. Mary conceived the Word first through the humility of her heart, and secondly through the purity of her body.

It is humility, says St. Augustine, which on the part of man should be the first and most necessary acquirement when conferring with God. If then God chose Mary to be His mother, it was that she alone appeared to Him, to possess that perfect humility which He required. In fact, as St. Bernard remarks, a God who was on the point of humiliating Himself even to the excess of clothing Himself with our flesh, ought to have an infinite liking for humility.

But what is there so peculiar in Mary's humility?

Why, first of all, it was a humility joined to a fulness of grace ; she was saluted as *Gratia plena*, full of grace ; and she replies that she is the handmaid of the Lord. Secondly, it was also a humility highly honourable ; an angel comes to tell her that she will be Mother of God, and she gives herself the title only of handmaid of the Lord.

This is what delighted Heaven ; this it is that determined the Word of God to leave the bosom of His Father and enclose Himself in the womb of Mary.

Whilst she humiliates herself before God, the Son of God empties Himself in her. "Emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (*Philip. ii. 7*).

From all this, let us learn to be humble. A mother of God humble, a God emptied ! What a lesson for us ! Without humility, there is no Christianity, no religion, since without humility, we should not have had the Incarnation or a God made Man.

Secondly, Mary conceived the Word through the purity of her body and through her virginity. The prophet had foretold that the Messiah should be born of a virgin ; and it was, says St. Bernard, essential, that a God by making Himself man should have had a virgin for a mother, since any other conception than that, would not have suited the dignity of God, and would have dimmed the brightness and glory of His divinity. Also, according to the beautiful idea of St. Bernard, the whole of this mystery passes between God, an angel, and Mary, which traces out for us three different characteristics of the most perfect purity.

From this, what conclusion can we come to ? Why, that God being of Himself the essence of purity, it was necessary that a union so wonderful should be in harmony, and this was accomplished when the Word was made flesh. God, in this mystery, even gives the preference to

virginal purity by choosing a virgin-mother, and by deputing an angel to be His ambassador.

Do not be astonished, continues St. Bernard, since the purity of this Virgin was so meritorious that it raised her above the level of angels. The angels are naturally pure, by a privilege of beatitude and glory, but Mary was so by election and virtue, so much so that she was troubled at the sight of an angel; this was the effect of her watchfulness to preserve the treasure of her purity. She was also ready to renounce the dignity of divine maternity rather than cease to be a virgin, and thus it was that God felt induced to descend into her in order that the Word should be made flesh: *Verbum caro factum est*.

You see from this what care we should ever take to preserve our bodies from any stain of impurity.

LE PÈRE BOURDALOUE.

• • • • •

Imagine what it is to be a Son of God, and you can have some idea what it is to be His mother; the excellence of the one will make you understand the excellence of the other.

ST. GREGORY.  
*On First Book of Kings.*



## 41.—On the Visitation.

PÈRES DU JARRY and D'ARGENTAN.

"Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

—LUKE I. 43.

ST. AMBROSE says that in this mystery there are two visits to be thought of—that of Jesus to St. John, and that of Mary to St. Elizabeth. St. John was in need of Jesus, and Elizabeth wanted Mary.

But how could these two children meet, enclosed, as they both were, in their mother's womb? How could two pregnant women, separated as they were from each other by road almost inaccessible—how could they see each other, during a season so rigorous?

You know it well, my brethren. Jesus secretly instils into the heart of Mary, a wish to visit her cousin Elizabeth—the greatness of her new dignity, a long fatiguing journey delays her not—the precious burthen she begins to carry relieving, as says St. Augustine, instead of incommoding her. Supported by this secret movement of grace which helps her on, she surmounts every obstacle, and at length arrives at the house of Zachary.

The presence of Jesus, causes John to leap for joy in his mother's womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost at the sight of Mary.

Mary's joy, humility, and gratitude shone forth in a manner quite divine, in that wonderful canticle she gave in answer to the blessings of Elizabeth. What mysteries, what instructions, are included in this our gospel history!

St. Ambrose was in ecstasy when he meditated on this celebrated visit, signalised as it was, by so many mysteries, prophecies, and wonders. This holy bishop, seems to display all his charming eloquence, in describing what took place at the interview of those illustrious mothers, one of which gave birth to the greatest among the children of men, and the other to a God made man for the salvation of all. Elizabeth, says this Father, is the first to hear the voice of Mary, but John, even before that, is sensible of the grace of Jesus—the one rejoices at the Blessed Virgin's visit, the other leaps for joy at the visit of his Saviour.

The two mothers proclaim aloud the marvels of divine grace, and the two children feel or produce the workings of the said grace. Jesus Christ fills St. John with the grace attached to the ministry of the Precursor, and St. John anticipates its functions in a wondrous manner; Elizabeth and Mary, interiorly animated by the spirit of their children, extract from their interview a series of oracles and prophecies.

L'ABBÉ DU JARRY.  
*On the Visitation.*

. . . . .

Ponder on the words which St. Elizabeth utters, and judge from them, how the Holy Spirit must have moved her. She seems, as it were, to shout with rapture, *Unde hoc mihi, ut veniat mater Domini mei ad me?* (Luke i. 43) —Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? I am only the mother of the servant, and behold the mother of the Almighty Monarch comes to visit me! Oh, charity unequalled! profound humility of the mother and her Son to visit me, their unworthy servant! Oh! happy, happy house, which is so filled with such precious favours from heaven, in which the Saviour of mankind pays His first visit on earth, and that, too, through the hands of the Blessed Virgin. Whence is this

to me! O adorable Providence, which has so graciously given me this happiness!

I have often remarked that one of her best precautions was to prepare for the reception of this abundance of grace, by making a long retreat of five months, thus hiding herself from the turmoil of the world. The Evangelist would not have mentioned this without a purpose, for we read in the first chapter of St. Luke: "And after those days Elizabeth, his wife conceived, and hid herself five months."

If that great saint had been distracted with the cares of the world, if she had not been in her house, when the Son of God, within the pure body of His holy Mother, came to honour her with a visit, she would, perhaps, have been deprived of all His favours; but she received graces in abundance, because God found her praying in solitude.

Happy is the soul who loves to be in retreat, thus flying from the noise and bustle of the world.

It is, while she is in retreat that God visits her, and that she rejoices in God: "I will allure her and will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart" (*Osee* ii. 14).

LE PÈRE D'ARGENTAN.  
*Conférence.*

## 42.—On the Purification.

BOURDALOUE and FATHER FABER.

"And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord."—  
LUKE ii. 22.

MARY, in obedience to the law of Moses, sacrifices even her own honour, since by the Purification, she appears in the same condition as that of other women. Thus the brightness of her virginity was obscured; of that virginity, of which she was so jealous in the mystery of the Incarnation; of that virginity, whose glory is to shine outwardly, and not show the least stain. She consents to risk her reputation and her name, and of all the humiliations that one, I dare to say, was the most difficult to bear—to be pure as the sun before God, and to appear impure, before the eyes of men. Such is, nevertheless, the sacrifice this most holy of virgins makes.

Now this law of God, my brethren, does not compel us to do anything so humiliating. It wishes that we should appear as we are; that being essentially submissive to the supreme control of God, we should not blush at duties which His law requires and at services which we are bound to perform; especially, being impure sinners, we should not be ashamed to perform practices of penance which are to cleanse, to reconcile us with God, and help us to pay off the debt of His divine justice.

But what do we do? By a strange reversing, we wi-

to be sinners, and yet appear to be good. Mary gives up all desire of outside show provided she is assured that the treasure of her virginity is preserved, and we, often even in the most trifling things, are but too anxious to keep up appearances.

Consider the many virtues she practises in this mystery: she hides her glory, not wishing to appear what she is; she emblazons her humility, by appearing what she is not.

She is Mother of God, and she appears only as the mother of a man; she comes to be purified in company with other mothers, although she is the purest of virgins. Dispensed from this humiliating law, she nevertheless carries it out to the very letter.

However dear that adorable Son may be, she offers Him up for us, even unto death, by presenting Him to the Eternal Father, as a propitiatory victim. It costs her much to hear the saddest and most heartrending prediction made on Him, and with what resignation did she not consent? O Lord, how conformed is the spirit of the Mother with the spirit of the Son, and how both are different from ours. We wish to appear what we are not; our pride cannot brook the idea of appearing as we are. Luxury, pomp, ambition, and vanity, accompany us even to the foot of the altar.

We are, however, charmed with the deep humility of the Blessed Virgin. Shall we never be but cold and indifferent admirers of the sublimest virtues? Does our love of purity inspire us with a great delicacy of conscience? What do we do, to acquire and cherish so necessary and delicate a virtue? Only those who are clean of heart shall see God.

BOURDALOUE.  
*On the Purification.*

Mary had spent twelve years of her sinless life in the courts of the Temple. It was there, that she had outwardly dedicated her virginity to God, which she had vowed in the first moment of her Immaculate Conception. It was there, she meditated over the ancient Scriptures, and learned the secrets of the Messias. She was coming back to it again, still virgin, yet, mystery of grace ! a mother with a child. She came to be purified, she who was purer than the untrodden snow on Lebanon. She came to present her child to God, and do for the Creator, what no creature but herself could do, give Him a gift fully equal to Himself.

When the second Temple was built, the ancients of the people lifted up their voices and wept, because its glory was not equal to the glory of the first. But the first Temple had never seen such a day, as that which was now dawning on the Temple of Herod. The glory of the Holy of Holies was but a symbol of the real glory, which Mary was now bearing thitherward in her arms. But she had two offerings with her. She bore one, and Joseph the other. She bore her child, and he, the pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, for her purification. Many saw them pass. But there was nothing singular in them, nothing especially attractive to the eyes of the beholders. So it always is, where God is. Now that He is visible, He is, in truth, except to faith and love, just as invisible, as He ever was.

. . . . .

Mary made her offerings, and "performed all things according to the law of the Lord." For the Spirit of Jesus was a spirit of obedience ; and although the brightness of angelic innocence was dull beside the whiteness of her purity, she obeyed the law of God in the ceremony of her purification, the more readily as it was a concealment of her graces. But she bore also in her arms, her true turt'

dove, to do for Him likewise "according to the custom of the law."

She placed Him in the arms of the aged priest Simeon, as she has done since in vision to so many of the saints, and the full light broke on Simeon's soul. Weak with age, he threw his arms around his God. He bore the whole weight of the Creator, and yet stood upright. The sight of that infant face, was nothing less than the glory of heaven. The Holy Ghost had kept His promise. Simeon had seen, nay, was at that moment handling, "the Lord's Christ."

O blessed priest! worn down with age, wearied with thy long years of waiting for the "Consolation of Israel," kept alive in days which were out of harmony with thy spirit, even as St. John the Evangelist was after thee, surely He who made thee, He who is so soon to judge thee, He whom thou art folding so proudly in thine arms, must have sent the strength of His omnipotence into thy heart, else thou wouldst never have been able to stand the flood of strong gladness which, at that moment broke in upon thy spirit!

FATHER FABER (Orat.)

*Foot of the Cross.*

### 43.—On the Seven Dolours of Blessed Virgin Mary.

From an excellent work entitled "*Essais de Sermons*,"  
and FATHER FABER.

"And thy own soul a sword shall pierce."

—LUKE ii. 35.

IF we sincerely wish to be really and truly the children of Mary, we cannot do better than try to imitate our Mother. Let us ascend to Calvary, let us constantly remain with her at the foot of the cross, let us share with her in the sufferings of Jesus, and let us impress on our hearts the image of the Crucified One.

If St. John had not ascended Mount Calvary, the Saviour would not have given Mary to us in so marked a manner. We cannot hope to be fervent children of Mary if we are not to be found with her on Mount Calvary. It is there that she has adopted us—it is there only that she will acknowledge that we are her children.

You deceived yourself, O great Apostle, when you said on Mount Thabor, that you wished to be always there, —*Bonum est hic esse* (Luke ix. 33)—It is good to be here. You did not know then, that the glory of Thabor is reserved for a happy eternity, and that Calvary is the sole inheritance of God's children on earth.

It is at the foot of the cross that Mary can say, "Look and make it according to the pattern, that was shewn thee in the mount" (*Exodus* xxv. 40). If you wish to be



my children, imitate the example that I give you. Be firm and constant at the foot of the cross; and know that if you keep away or stand aloof, you can neither be children of God nor a child of Mary.

If we simply were compelled to compassionate our dying Saviour, we should find many a tender-hearted Christian who would be easily led to practices of piety. But it is not merely a question of compassion; we must not endeavour to imitate, we must be crucified with Jesus Christ. If Mary does not see within us the likeness of her dear crucified Son, she will not acknowledge us as her children: "For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son" (*Romans* viii. 29).

If that be true, can we believe that we are children of Mary? Alas! very far from being on Calvary and at the foot of the cross, we are at the feet of earthly idols to whom we offer a continual sacrifice; and, far from being an image of Jesus crucified, we are more like to the evil one.

Ah, holy Virgin! since you have suffered so much to be our Mother, obtain for us favours from your Son, so that He may make us worthy to be your children; and, after having accompanied and imitated you on Calvary, we may, through your powerful intercession, be found worthy to reign with you in heaven.

*From the "Essais de Sermons."  
Carême.*

. . . . .

The first thing that strikes us about our Lady's Dolours is their immensity, not in its literal meaning, but in the sense in which we commonly use with reference to created things. It is to her sorrows that the Church applies those words of Jeremias: "O all ye that pass by the way,

attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow. To what shall I compare thee, and to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? for 'great as the sea is thy broken-heartedness: who shall heal thee?"

Mary's love is spoken of as that which many waters could not quench. In like manner, the saints and doctors of the Church have spoken of the greatness of her sorrows. St. Anselm says, whatever cruelty was exercised upon the bodies of the martyrs was light, or rather it was as nothing, compared to the cruelty of Mary's passion. St. Bernardin of Siena says, that so great was the dolour of the Blessed Virgin, that if it was subdivided and parcelled out among all creatures capable of suffering, they would perish instantly. An angel revealed to St. Bridget, that if our Lord had not miraculously supported His Mother, it would not have been possible for her to live through her martyrdom.

It would be easy to multiply similar passages, both from the revelations of the saints and the writings of the doctors of the Church.

. . . . .

Where is Mary to look with her soul's eye, for consolation? Nay, her soul's eye must look where her body's eye is fixed already. It is bent on Jesus, and it is that very sight which is her torture. She sees His Human Nature, and she is the Mother, the Mother beyond all other mothers, loving as never mother loved before, as all mothers together could not love, if they might compact their myriad loves, into one intensest nameless act.

He is her Son, and such a Son, and in so marvellous a way her Son. He is her treasure and her all. What a fund of misery—keen, quick, deadly, unequalled—was

there in that sight! And yet there was far more than that. There was His Divine Nature.

Yes! He is God. She saw that, through the darkness of the eclipse. But then the blood, the spittings, the earth stains, the unseemly scars, the livid, many-coloured bruises, what did all that mean on a Person, only and eternally divine? It is vain to think of giving a name to such misery as then flooded her soul. Jesus, the joy of the martyrs, is the executioner of His Mother. Twice over, to say the least, if not a third time also, did He crucify her, once by His Human Nature, once by His Divine, it indeed body and soul did not make two crucifixions from the Human Nature only. No martyrdom was ever like to this. No given number of martyrdoms, approach to a comparison with it.

It is a sum of sorrow which material units, ever so many added together, ever so often multiplied, do not go to form. It is a question of kind as well as of degree; and hers was a kind of sorrow, which has only certain affinities to any other kinds of sorrow, and is simply without a name, except the name which the simple children of the Church call it by—the Dolours of Mary.

FATHER FABER (Orat.)  
*Foot of the Cross.*

## 44.—On the Assumption of our Blessed Lady.

LE PÈRE NOUET.

“Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?”—CANTICLE vi. 9.

*Extracts from PÈRE NOUET'S “Vie de Jésus dans les Saints.”*

THE Holy Ghost had enkindled so ardent a flame in the heart of the Blessed Virgin, that it was really a continuous miracle that she sustained so impetuous a heavenly fire without dying, and this repeatedly burst forth from her breast. For if St. Ephrem cried out in his desert cell, and placed his hands over his heart lest it should burst and split; if St. Francis of Assisi thought that he would die of joy when he heard an angel sing a strain of the celestial choir; if St. Francis Xavier, laying bare his bosom to breathe more freely, and looking up to heaven, beseeched his merciful Lord and Master to be sparing of His favours, and to remind Him that a human heart could not endure such a flood of consoling light; what must our Blessed Lady have felt, she who received more than all the saints put together? How was it, that she did not expire at every moment? How was it that she was not consumed with the flames of love divine, more especially as the Son of God, who is love itself, had willed and chosen to dwell for nine long months in her virginal womb? Cannot we say, with St. Bernard, that her chaste interior was laden

with love, that she had neither heart nor life, if we be allowed to say so ; but that love was her heart, and to live for God and love Him too, was one and the same thing ?

The life of the Seraphim consists in seeing God, in loving Him always, in enjoying an eternity of bliss ; and, as St. Gregory observes, wherever they go, they never go out of God—they fly in the bosom of His immensity, they dwell in His heart, they exercise their divine functions in the sanctuary of His divinity.

This was then veritably the life of the Blessed Virgin ; she shared the rank of the blessed in heaven, far, far above the state of mortals who lived on earth ; her heart was ever near to God, and God was alway in her heart ; her sleep was one continual dream of love, and she could say with the spouse in the Canticle : “I sleep and my heart watcheth” (*chap. v. 2*).

Doubtless the death of Mary was a greater miracle, for to what can we attribute the cause ? Who can tell the cause of so wonderful a death ? Can we attribute the cause to sin ? Oh, no ; she is innocence itself ; her conception is immaculate, her birth was stainless, her life without reproach ; and never having been a slave of sin, she needed not to pay the debt of nature. To sickness ? No ; she was never ill, and her body was exempt from the gradual decay of nature. To agony ? No ; death would appear to be too welcome to be painful. Is it to the shafts of divine love ? but love was the mainstay of her life, how could it have caused her death ? To her Son’s cross ? But if she was to die, why did she not die on Calvary ?

It is certain that never a mother loved her son so much, because no mother had a son who was hers alone—no mother had a son so loving, so perfect ; there never was a mother, who had a heart so inflamed with the fire of divine love. Many a time and oft, many mothers have died either

with grief at seeing their children die, or with fear at seeing them on the point of dying.

How was it, then, that the Blessed Virgin did not die at the death of her Son, she who loved Him so, she who saw Him suffer such a cruel death? You will tell me, with St. Bernardin, that to live without Him, was a greater martyrdom than dying with Him; because in dying with Him she would have been martyred only once, but in surviving Him every moment of her life, was simply a torture.

What wonder then that her life was a species of death, and that death, thus reversing the order of nature, was a renewal of her life?

. . . . .

It is impossible for any one to describe the excess of glory and the sublimity of the ever Blessed Virgin's throne. We need not be astonished, as Arnold de Chartres remarks, because her glory exceeds that of all others. She has a rank of her own; her pedestal is raised considerably higher than that of the angels; the glory she possesses is not solely a glory like unto that of the Word Incarnate, it is in a certain way similar: *Gloriam cum matre, non tam communem judico quam eandem.*

O King of glory, it is certain that magnificence and grandeur are inherent to Your holy habitation; You have given striking proofs of this, on the feast of the Assumption of Your holy Mother. You have crowned her Queen of all saints; there is no one but the King who precedes her. She is so glorious, that one would say that it is the glory of God itself, or rather that God had her with His own glory. She is so great and powerful near You, that she herself cannot fathom the extent of her power.

LE PÈRE NOUET, S.J.

## 45.—On the Holy Rosary.

FATHER FABER and  
PÈRE NICOLAS DE DIJON.

"It is better, therefore, that two should be together than one, for they have the advantage of their society."—ECCLESIASTES iv. 9.

I CANNOT conceive a man being spiritual who does not habitually say the Rosary. It may be called the queen of indulgenced devotions. First, consider its importance, as a specially Catholic devotion, as so peculiarly giving us a Catholic turn of mind by keeping Jesus and Mary perpetually before us, and as a singular help to final perseverance, if we continue the recital of it, as various revelations show.

Next consider its institution, by St. Dominic in 1214, by revelation, for the purpose of combating heresy, and the success which attended it. Its matter and form, are no less striking. Its matter, consists of the Pater, the Ave, and the Gloria, whose authors are our Blessed Lord himself, St. Gabriel, St. Elizabeth, the Council of Ephesus, and the whole Church, led in the West by St. Damasus. Its form is a complete abridgment of the Gospel, consisting of fifteen mysteries in decades, expressing the three great phases of the work of redemption, joy, sorrow, and glory. Its peculiarity is the next attractive feature about it. It unites mental with vocal prayer. It is a devotional compendium of theology. It is an efficacious practice of the presence of God. It is one

chief channel of the conditions of the Incarnation among the faithful. It shows the true nature of devotion to our Blessed Lady; and is a means of realising the communion of saints.

Its ends are the love of Jesus, reparation to the Sacred Humanity for the outrages of heresy, and a continual affectionate thanksgiving to the most Holy Trinity, for the benefit of the Incarnation.

It is sanctioned by the Church, by miracles, by indulgences, by the conversion of sinners, and by the usage of the saints. See also, how much the method of reciting it involves. We should first make a picture of the mystery, and always put our Blessed Lady into the picture; for the Rosary is hers. We should couple some duty or virtue with each mystery, and fix beforehand on some soul in purgatory, to whom to apply the vast indulgences.

Meanwhile, we must not strain our minds, or be scrupulous; for to say the Rosary well, is quite a thing which requires learning. Remember always, as the *Raccolta* teaches, that the fifteenth is the coronation of Mary, and not merely the glory of the saints.

FATHER FABER (Orat.)  
*Growth in Holiness.*

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The first founders of the holy Rosary, filled with the grace of the Holy Ghost, and all on fire with divine love, made their appearance as new apostles ready to sacrifice their lives, and shed their blood for the love of Jesus Christ, for the honour of the Church, and for the defence of their faith.

It is a truth which is easy of proof by a fact perhaps the most memorable that may have happened in France



since God was therein known. The spirit of heresy, which is inseparable from the spirit of rebellion, had spread far and wide among the Albigenses. These heretics, not being able to defend themselves by argument or by Holy Scripture, resolved to support their errors by fire and sword. The King of Arragon, the Counts of Toulouse and Armagnac, many other sovereigns and great lords increased this party, and, uniting their forces, they succeeded in collecting a force of one hundred thousand men. Terror spreads around, and the storm equally threatens religion and the state: success must be decided, on one side or the other.

Who will dare to oppose this torrent? Who will disperse the tempest? Fear not; the God of armies, who formerly sent Simon Machabee to protect the Jews and to save the synagogue, raised up Simon de Montfort, the Machabee of France, for the protection of the Church and the Catholics.

The ever Blessed Virgin, on the other hand, giving the Rosary to St. Dominic, repeated these consoling words: "Take this holy sword, a gift from God, wherewith thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of my people" (*2 Machabees* xv. 16).

This promise was not fruitless; this Rosary was like Gideon's sword which, under the form of blades of barley, caused such havoc in the camp of the Madianites. In fact, it may be said, that if this immense heretical army was overthrown and cut to pieces, it was owing more to the efficacy of the Rosary, than to the power of the crusade. The Count de Montfort's army was strong in numbers, but the piety of his soldiers, and the help they received from above, made them as brave as lions. He did what Judas Machabeus did: "He armed every one of them, not with defence of shield and spear, but with very good speeches and exhortations" (*2 Machabees*

xv. 11). He armed them with the Rosary too, and at once gave the signal to charge. Invoking the name of the Lord, they fearlessly attacked the enemy; with prayers on their lips, confident of victory, and sword in hand, they overthrew the enemy's squadrons one after the other, galloped over the bodies of the slain, and gained one of the most famous of victories—a victory which saved the kingdom, and was the triumph of religion.

O Holy Virgin, the Church is indeed in the right to sing your praises: *Cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo*,—that it is to you alone that we can attribute the defeat of every heresy.

. . . . .

The Rosary is the most powerful, at the same time the most efficacious, of daily devotions, since all kinds of favours are granted to those who recite it devoutly and regularly. If you wish to know what particular graces we obtain therefrom, the following are those, which the Blessed Alain de la Roche learned from the Blessed Virgin herself:—*Sanctitas vitæ, morum honestas, mundi contemptus, domorum disciplina*—Holiness of life, integrity of purpose, contempt of the world, and peace of Christian homes.

LE PÈRE NICOLAS DE DIJON.  
*On the Rosary.*

## 46.—On our Lady of Mount Carmel.

LE PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.

"All her domestics are clothed with double garments."

—PROVERBS xxxi. 21.

I KNOW full well that we have within ourselves certain signs of our predestination, nevertheless they are but conjectures which tend to strengthen our hope, but do not entirely dissipate the just fears which God wills that we should have, when we think of His impenetrable judgments. No one, says St. Gregory, so long as he remains on earth, can positively know what is decreed in heaven as to his predestination, or as to his eternal loss. This is the sad condition in which we live here below; we are certain of soon finishing our career in this place of exile, without really knowing, if we shall ever see our own true country.

We must not lose sight of this tuition if we wish to prevent faults, into which we are sure to fall, without that.

Our dear Lady of Mount Carmel has placed no limits to our hope in becoming her children; the promise she has made of protecting us is not limited by any condition; she has engaged that she will not suffer us to be unhappy for all eternity, that is to say, she gives us every hope of our salvation that we can possibly have in this life; she promises by that, that if we persevere in her service we shall infallibly persevere in grace.

But what do you say of so magnificent a promise? Has the Blessed Virgin explained it to your satisfaction, or do you cherish some scruple? When, to calm the anxiety which the uncertainty of your salvation causes you, you

would have dictated to our Blessed Lady the promises she has made, could you have chosen more formal promises?

The holy Fathers, when they have spoken in general terms of the power of the Blessed Virgin, have made use of expressions quite as strong and quite as favourable. St. Bonaventura does not give any other limit to the power of Mary, than to the almighty power of God. St. Antoninus assures us that God does not make a favour when He listens to her prayers, but He grants them as an indispensable duty, and that she would not know what it is to be refused. St. Anselm asserts that a true servant of Mary cannot be lost.

Here you have opinions sufficiently capable of inducing you to place entire confidence in the Mother of Mercy; but however learned and holy these men may have been who have given us these splendid testimonials, they fall short of the promises our Blessed Lady made to St. Simon Stock, and of these I am about to speak.

They teach me that I have nothing to fear if the Blessed Virgin takes an interest in me, but that is not sufficient to appease my uneasiness; I wish to know if she does so really.

She gives me here manifest and visible proofs. It depends upon myself to take it in its right sense. She has attached to this scapular her protection, for she says, "He who is clothed with this habit shall not endure everlasting fire."

I am not, then, astonished that at the first report of so magnificent a promise, Christians from all parts flocked to the holy community of Mount Carmel, to whom she had intrusted so precious a treasure.

Noblemen, princes, kings even, who have as much to fear for their salvation as the commonest of men, eagerly desired to participate in the privileges of these holy religious—they whose grandeurs exposed them daily to so many dangers.

This scapular imposes upon all members of the Confraternity of Mount Carmel, the obligation of leading a pious and truly Christian life, by renouncing the maxims of the world, as did the early Christians when they received the Sacrament of Baptism, and were clothed in a habit appropriate for the ceremony.

But many never think of this, and to this, may be attributed the cause of their not fulfilling the duties of their profession. We must, from time to time, call to mind our engagements, in order to fulfil the promises we made when we received the habit.

Once upon a time a powerful monarch, when he was urged to perform some action unworthy of his high rank, immediately displayed his regal tunic to those who had solicited him: "Should I be worthy to wear this purple robe," said he, "if I had soiled it by even a single cowardly deed? Would it not make me blush every day of my life, if I had dishonoured it merely for the purpose of avoiding death? Could I ever look upon it without feeling an inward reproach, that even for one day I was unworthy to wear it?" Then rising up, he wrapped his mantle around him and said, that he would prefer to die gloriously, rather than lower his dignity by performing an unworthy action.

This, my dear brothers, ought to be our sentiment when we wear so holy a habit; it ought to distinguish us from men of the world; it ought to put us on our guard. Does this habit reproach me? Will it not make me blush at the awful judgment-seat of God? This would be our case if, after the promises we made, we should relax and fall. Let us then keep up the holiness of this habit by an exact observance of all the duties of our state of life.

*Sermons on every Subject.*

## 47.—On the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

PÈRES TEXIER and FLECHIER.

“Behold I am with you at all times, even to the consummation of the world.”

—MATTHEW xxviii. 20.

[CLAUDE TEXIER was one of the many distinguished preachers, who lived during the reign of Louis XIV. of France. Born in Poitou during the year 1610, he entered the Society of Jesus at the early age of eighteen. After the completion of his noviceship, and after teaching theology and rhetoric for five years, he pronounced his four vows, and devoted himself to the direction of consciences and to the study of preaching. He subsequently was appointed Rector of the Colleges of Limoges, Poitiers, and Bordeaux, and finally became Provincial of Aquitaine. He delivered the Lenten Discourses before the court of Louis XIV. in the year 1661. Of the many works he had published in Paris from 1675 to 1678, perhaps none will be more interesting to the general reader, than his “Panégryrique des Saints,” 1678. He died at the Jesuit College in Bordeaux on the 24th of April 1687, aged seventy-seven.]

THE Christians of the primitive Church enticed the pagans, not only by their generous and unconquerable patience, but also by the holiness of their lives; and the heretics, as corrupt in their manners as they were in their belief, were the cause that the name of Jesus Christ was blasphemed among the Gentiles, and that the light and brightness of the Church, was blackened by an infinity of calumnies.

Read ecclesiastical history, and you will not find an age in which hell has not vomited forth some new heresy, and where the devil has not succeeded in seducing some one member of the Church to arm and fight against the body. You will see that there is not a single article of the Creed which has not been assailed, not one article of faith for the

destruction of which the devil has not even distorted the words of Holy Scripture and the power of the Word of God.

As for myself, I confess that nothing demonstrates the goodness and miraculous protection of Almighty God, so much as the preservation and augmentation of the Church in the midst of heresies.

A vast number of heresies have attacked the Church, a thousand storms have raged over it, but in the midst of tempests this ship, though battered by many rolling billows, has not been shattered or engulfed. Truth remains, errors pass away. All these heresies, aided by the eloquence, doctrine, and subtlety of their authors, supported by the powerful influence of the great and noble, sustained by the armies of emperors, have passed away, or are passing away. All these heresies have made much noise, and, by the impetuosity of the infected waters, have carried away all those who were not strongly bound to the Church. They have floated with the stream, as says St. Jerome: *Feruntur hæreses prono eloquentia cursu; quemcumque obvium et levem invenerint, secum trahunt: sed, tanquam torrentes, velociter transierunt.*

And this is the reason—they are the muddy waters that have for their source the invention of man, and not the pure and limpid stream that comes from God, who is the Fountain and Source of all sanctity.

If the apostles, and those apostolic men who were eminent for their sanctity, had not been the instruments of Almighty God, but in reality the authors of the Church, the Church would have failed when those apostolic men were no more.

Besides—for we need not dissemble—how many times has it not been seen that those who held the places of apostles were not inheritors of their virtues, but, on the contrary, lived in a way totally opposed to the lives of saints?

Their faults, nevertheless, have never introduced error in the doctrine of which they were the depositaries and oracles, and the corruption of their manners have never tarnished the faith which had been intrusted to them.

It is strange, but true, that in all sects the doctrine is congenial to the hearts of those who taught it. It is not thus in the Christian religion. We must, then, acknowledge that its preservation, does not depend on men ; but there is a secret and divine virtue which sustains it in sanctity, and which causes it to last, in spite of the continual efforts of those who conspire its destruction, whether it be from within or without.

REV. FATHER TEXIER.

What blindness ! that each heretic forms his own idea of religion, according to his own private judgment, by refusing to subscribe to the tenets of the Church ; that each one, becomes the judge and umpire of eternal truths ; that from some particular tenet they frame a form of worship, and introduce ceremonies, to adore the God Almighty, or to appease His justice ; that they undertake to reform, interpret, and reverse the precepts of the law and Christian morals, which God has revealed to His Church, and which the inspired writers have left us !

Heretics have understood this anomaly, for after having refused to obey the legitimate successor of St. Peter (for whom Jesus Christ has prayed that his faith might not fail), they have been compelled to establish heads of their sects, so that they may see in their congresses and synods (which, by the by, they hold without any right, or without any old established form) the same power they cannot endure to see in the Catholic Church ; and after having the Augustinians, the Ambrosians, &c., they recognise the rebels and heresiarchs as their masters and interpreters of their religions.

FLECHIER.

*Life of Cardinal Commend*



## 48.—The Treasures of the Church.

LE PÈRE TEXIER.

"A dispensation is committed to me."

—1 COR. ix. 17.

IT must be now or never, that we must imitate the Apostle, and accomplish by penitential works, what is wanting in the passion of our Lord and Saviour.

We must implore of God the remission and indulgence of our sins, by offering satisfactions proportionate to the offence, as says St. Cyprian: *Deum plenius satisfactionibus deprecamur.*

A jubilee, is an indulgence made up of the precious Blood, tears, fasts, prayers, and alms of a penitent sinner; these exhaust the vengeance of God's justice and extinguish the fire of His anger. Now, there are two ways of satisfying the justice of Almighty God—one is the ordinary way, the other is the extraordinary.

The ordinary way, is the path strewn with penances, fasts, prayers, and alms-deeds; there is nothing too guilty which these will not but prove useful and serviceable. But there is an extraordinary way, a path of grace and a mixture of mercy and justice. It is extraordinary, because with little, it does much, and the justice of God is satisfied with this little.

From these I calculate that there must be a great distinction between ordinary penance and a jubilee. The first is, that penance works slowly, it takes time; to-day a fast, to-morrow another, as one who pays his debts by

instalments. Now, in the indulgences of a jubilee, we have an abridgment of God's mercy. It makes quick work of His mercies ; it is a way, that what would have taken years of penance in the ordinary way we can expiate and satisfy at this acceptable time (the indulgence proclaimed) in a day.

Some Fathers of the Church, in speaking of penance, call it *Compendium pœnarum æternum* (a shortening of eternal punishment), because what we owe to the justice of God in eternity, we expiate it by means of penance in a few days. But we venture to say that an indulgence is still a further abridgment of penance, because penance costs us more than an indulgence. Another distinction is, that it is difficult and harassing to expiate our sins by sharp penances, but it becomes easy of satisfaction through indulgences ; one is a rigorous baptism, the other a merciful baptism.

Thus, we can distinguish three kinds of baptism. The baptism by water costs nothing to the recipient, the baptism of penance costs much, and the baptism of an indulgence is between the two : we therein find a full remission of our sins, but at very little cost.

It is a mingling of the satisfactions of Jesus Christ and those of the sinner, and the little that the sinner contributes is worth very much. It is not, however, on account of our own satisfactions that jubilees have been established, it is chiefly on those of our Saviour, because He has merited that indulgence for us through His precious Blood, and that He has left us the treasures of His own merits to defray all costs.

If you ask me why our Lord and Saviour has given the power of applying the merits of His precious Blood by indulgences and jubilees to His vicars, the sovereign pontiffs, I would answer that He wishes to save us the more easily.

It was not sufficient for Him to have extinguished the eternal flames of hell, but He wishes further, that His Blood should serve to liquidate the debts of temporal punishment, which are owing to the justice of God.

In the primitive Church, when Christians were full of zeal and fervour, there was not so much occasion for jubilees for expiating their past sins; they cheerfully submitted to the strictest penances, and had no other wish to satisfy divine justice, than by practising rigorous austerities. But because, in the course of time, charity grew cold, jubilees and indulgences were needed, in order we might be able to be reconciled to God, and to satisfy fully His justice.

As the jubilee was given to Christians through an extraordinary flow of divine mercy, we must remark that, according to Holy Scripture, there is in God a mercy which, on account of its grand result, is called great: *Secundum magnam misericordiam tuam*—According to Thy great mercy.

Now this great mercy of our Lord and God, is like unto one of those grand and noble rivers which seem to be ever full, but which, at certain seasons of the year, the tide runs so high, that the water overflows the banks, and fertilises the fields around.

Thus we may say that it is at the time of a jubilee, that the divine mercy inundates the Christian people, and overwhelms the faithful with a deluge of graces. This abundant stream of God's merciful goodness, does not only wash the roots of those trees growing on its banks, as the Psalmist says, that is to say, it does not communicate itself to the good and fervent alone, but it is intended for the greatest of sinners, those who are the furthest removed from Him.

LE PÈRE TRXIER.  
*Dominicale.*

## 49.—On the Ministry of God's Church.

FLECHIER and ST. JEROME.

"He that heareth you, heareth me ; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."  
—LUKE x. 16.

IN the first book of Paralipomenon (*chap.* xv. 14) it mentions that the priests and Levites were sanctified to carry the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel.

If the priests of the Old Testament, who offered up the incense and common bread, were required to be holy, if they were to be sanctified to carry the ark of the Lord God of Israel, ought not the priests of the New Testament to be truly sanctified ; for do they not offer up the Heavenly bread, the Bread of Life, the only Son of God, and have they not the honour of carrying daily the Lord of the ark, even the very God of Israel ? In another place it is said, " Purify yourselves, you who have charge of the vessels of the sanctuary."

You do not carry solely the vessels of the Lord, my brethren ; you carry the Lord Himself, you bear Him in your hands, you carry Him on your tongues, you enclose Him in your hearts. How, then, dare you carry Him with unclean hands, on indiscreet tongues, in corrupted hearts ? How can you be so cruel as to carry Him with you in the world, which is His enemy, and wherein sin and abomination dwell ?

The High Priest said one day : As I have always lived far apart from the world, I fancied that my brethren

lived as I did; but I have been surprised, by persons of the first consideration who have come to find me out, and who have told me, that not only the people of Israel, but the priests and Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands and from their abominations" (1 *Esdras* xv).

I was so deeply moved by this news, continues this holy man, that "I rent my mantle and my coat, and plucked off the hairs of my head and my beard, and I sat down mourning" (*Esdras* xv. 3).

Priests should be holy, says God, because I am holy, and that My being holy I wish My ministers to be holy, and I cannot endure any but holy men to approach Me or My altars. Sanctity is a necessary appendage for the priest, and the want of holiness is a species of irregularity which is unbearable, and which I cannot suffer.

Let not those who have not the courage to try to become saints, be rash enough to be priests of My altars: "They shall not come near to me, to do the office of priest to me; neither shall they come near to any of my holy things that are by the holy of holies" (*Ezechiel* xliv. 13). This is as much as to say, that priests who are not holy do an injury to God; they tarnish the glory of His name; they defile His temple, altar, and sacrifice; they scandalise His religion; they do violence to His sanctity; they offend His Divine Majesty, and this is what the following words signify: *Et non pollut nomen ejus*.

. . . . .

There is no condition of life more noble, more exalted, than that of being a priest of Jesus Christ; there is also no state which requires more preparation. They belong to God by a particular consecration; consequently they ought to be more attached to Him. They are privileged to approach near to God, and they ought to be of the

purest. They beseech and appease God for all the faithful, so they ought to be worthy of His propitiation for themselves.

They represent Jesus Christ; they ought to enter into His spirit; they dispense and offer up the holy mysteries; from these they ought to gather its firstfruits. As they should be masters of the spiritual life, it is only right that they should fix it in their own hearts, and by their actions, show that they love all that is spiritual. They reprove and correct others, so their conduct should be irreproachable. They have received more graces, they should therefore be more grateful; their sins attract attention, and therefore they should be the more cautious. It is difficult for them to retrieve themselves if they fall, and they ought to preserve their innocence, with fear and trembling.

Reflections, such as these should induce, those whom God has called to this holy state to exercise the greatest care imaginable.

Idleness and disgust usually follow haste and imprudence, says St. Bernard. He who usurps the office of priesthood, will be a useless possessor of such a dignity. Not having consulted God, he will not be the work of God's own hand; and having closed the entrance of grace, he will be unable to fulfil properly and faithfully those functions which the grace of God can alone enable him to accomplish.

On the other hand, a genuine vocation engenders zeal, and it is difficult for him who has devoted himself entirely to the service of God not to make it his sole business to serve and honour Him.

The priesthood of Jesus Christ is not a sinecure, but a ministry of toil and trouble, which includes a multiplicity of essential duties difficult to carry out.

"Be thou vigilant and labour in all things," says the

Apostle to Timothy, exhorting him to strengthen himself in his laborious vocation, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and to "labour as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," which will enable him to resist all the powers of darkness. "Do the work of an evangelist," preaching the Word of God, after having impressed it upon his own heart, and rendered it manifest by his own deeds. "Fulfil thy ministry," not so much to keep the faith, as to preserve it pure and holy—mysteries of our Lord and Saviour which must be carried out with fear, and secrets of conscience which must be religiously concealed. "Keep that which is committed to thy trust," and be prepared to carry out any amount of duty which truth, justice, and charity may impose upon you.

L'ABBÉ FLECHIER.  
*From his Panegyrics.*

The clergy are called by that name, either because they are a portion of the inheritance of the Lord or because the Lord is their portion. He, therefore, who is thus of the heirdom of the Lord, or he who has God for his portion, should show himself to be worthy of possessing God, and that God should possess him.

He who engages to serve the Church, as a minister of Christ, knows well at first the meaning of the title, and by understanding the full significance of the name of priest, it enforces the fulfilment of every duty of his office.

ST. JEROME.  
*Epist. ad Nepotianum.*

## 50.—On Material Churches.

FLECHIER and ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

“How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.”—PSALM lxxxiii. 2, 3.

*Extracts from a Sermon preached by MGR. FLECHIER on the Dedication of the Church of St. James the Major, in Paris.*

UNFORTUNATELY, there are people who go to church, without humility or prudence; they assist at the grand services, as if they were going to the theatre. Instead of thinking of the feast, or with any idea of being attentive, they ridicule all they see. Loaded as they are with sins, they insolently stride across the threshold of those sacred gates, according to the language of the prophet; they affect a grand air, as if they were persons of distinction, and this, too, in those places where all worldly importance should cease to be.

They hurry on the crowd in order to be a near witness of the ceremonies, rather than having a wish to participate in heavenly graces. They push even to the altar rails, not through an earnest eager devotion, but through a vain curiosity. They bring in with them a worldly heart; and when even they are coldly speaking and praying to Almighty God, they are thinking more of themselves and of their vanities. In fact, they have no scruples in going in, and they drag in with them their iniquities without compunction or remorse.



What shall I say of those impieties which are committed daily in the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle, who, all invisible as He is, is no less to be adored?—of those profane remarks, which disturbing the holy and venerable silence of the sacred mysteries, interrupting the meditations of the faithful, reaching even to the sanctuary, and distracting the attention of the ministers who are attending on the celebrant?

What of those mincing airs and indecorous postures which so scandalise the good, which are, according to the words of Jesus Christ, the desolation of those holy places, where angels assist with fear and trembling? What shall I say of those affected ways, of seeing and wishing to be seen, which convert the house of God into a place of rendezvous for immodest glances and guilty thoughts?

We see, with no small amount of indignation, some Christians, (if I may dare to call them Christians), who scarcely deign to bend a knee when Jesus is exposed for the adoration of the faithful, as if to dispute the homage that is due to Him, as if it pricked their conscience and reminded them of the little feeling of religion which may be left within them.

Worldly persons, more gaily decked out than the altars even, display proudly their luxurious finery, and often seem proud of their indecent attire, and this too, before the poor and humble Jesus, hidden in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

We see sinners entering heart and soul into conversations that only re-enkindle their bad passions, and thus commit fresh sins even in front of those tribunals of penance, wherein they should confess and weep for them.

It thus happens, that the very means of our salvation become the instruments of our loss; that the church, which is the place wherein we should sanctify ourselves, becomes the theatre of our delinquencies; that prayers are

turned into sins, that even the sacrifice of our Lord, which is the source of all graces, becomes a subject of condemnation; and that nothing in His judgment can perhaps more add to our guilt, than the having entered into His temple, and the having assisted unworthily at His mysteries.

How many there are, who go to church in order to keep up a certain decorous reputation, because it is customary, because it would not do to offend the world, bad as it is—a world which piques itself on certain rules of decorum, and a desire to keep up an outward show of religion!

How many there are, who acknowledge and practise an exterior worship, who glorify God with their lips, whose prayers are heartless, who give up their minds to voluntary distractions, speak without thinking, pray without knowing what they are saying, and expect that God listens to them when they do not listen to themselves! This is what St. Cyprian says: How many there are who, when they make an act of devotion, fancy they do honour to the church they frequent, who are always in the most conspicuous seats, and who only approach to God, merely to be seen by men!

How many there are, who come to church because they are forced to come, who consider the long service of a great feast a bore, and who grumble because they are under the necessity of hearing a sermon, or of remaining until the grand High Mass is over! Is not all this an abuse of holy things?

We should enter God's temple in order to become holy. It seems to me that all therein should conduce to our sanctification; that baptismal font which reminds us of the origin of our spiritual regeneration, and puts us in mind of the grace and obligations of our baptism; those altars teach us, that we have a heart wherein Jesus wishes to dwell, and wherein we can offer as many sacrifices as we have temptations. Those confessionals, do they not

invite us to sigh for our sins, do they not make us long to be bathed in the precious Blood of Jesus? That pulpit, does it not preach to us that we should be new men, engendered by the Word of God? That divine and adorable tabernacle, does it not lovingly entreat us to kneel and pray before Him with great purity of intention, and to ask for the grace to love Him more and more?

L'ABBÉ FLECHIER.

. . . . .

You have the church, which is a refuge, and, if I may dare to say so, is a heaven in miniature. You have a sacrifice offered up and consummated; you have the house wherein the Holy Ghost showers down abundant graces; you have the tombs and relics of the martyrs and saints, and many other things, which should induce you to return from a state of sin and indifference to that of grace and justice.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.  
*Homily lxi.*

## 51.—On Sundays and Holidays.

PÈRE MONTMOREL, and from  
“*Les Discours Chrétiennes.*”

“Blessed is the man who observes the Sabbath-day, who keeps his hands pure, and who abstains from any kind of sin.”—ISAIAH lvi. 2.

THE Sunday has succeeded to the Sabbath. It is forbidden on that holy day to do any servile work, and all are under the strict obligation of attending the divine office. After having spent six days in the tumult of temporal affairs, is it not just and right to devote one day for the purpose of collecting one's thoughts, and of thinking of spiritual things?

You work during six days, says the Lord, and in those six days you do all that you have to do. But the seventh day, is consecrated to the Lord your God.

To celebrate Sundays and holidays properly, your chief aim should be, to avoid all that is evil, and to do good.

It is true that there can be no time when it is permitted to do wrong, or that we are not always obliged to do good; still it is also true that we have particular obligations on fixed days to avoid the one with greater care, and to do the other with greater zeal.

Alas! who would credit it if one did not see it with their own eyes? Christians, as uncouth as the Jews, think that they satisfy the obligation of keeping the Sunday by merely abstaining from manual labour, as if they acted solely from a wise policy or to give rest to a tired body, not from any wish of strengthening the soul, after it has been weakened by the worry and cares of business.

It is also true that many, whose profession consists chiefly of head-work, or those who have nought else to do but play and amuse themselves, make no difference on feast-days, except the hearing a Mass in a hurried way, their minds thinking of worldly things, their hearts filled with frivolities. We can even affirm that, generally speaking, more harm is done on Sundays and holidays. It is this that caused St. Chrysostom to say that the Sabbath, which had been set apart for cleansing our souls from sins committed during the week, was a day set apart for the commission of greater sins.

How do most people follow this precept? Instead of employing the Sunday for the expiation of their faults, we may safely say, especially of those engaged in mercenary occupations, that it is a day for adding sin to sins. They spend the day in all kinds of sensuality, and give themselves up to drunken joy.

Our Lord could now say, what He said in former times to the Jews through the mouth of His prophet Isaias: "I hate your solemnities of the first day of the month, and all your other feasts; they have become burthensome, and I am weary of enduring them." Mark these words, "Your solemnities;" as if our Lord had said: You have made My feasts your feasts, and the days that ought to be consecrated to My glory, you devote to the satiety of your passions: *Solemnitates vestros odivit anima mea*.

As regards manual labour, it is not bad in itself, and it is not to condemn it, that God forbids it on days that are consecrated holy. It is not also that He approves of idleness, which of itself is a great evil; but it is in order that all work or employment, however good in itself, must yield for a time to one more excellent—a work for which man is created—which is to know God, to adore, honour, and love Him above all. This is the chief end of the law.

You shall work for six days in the week, and during

that time you can do your work and provide for your wants; but the seventh day is the Lord's day, and you must relinquish labour to offer Him your love, adoration, and homage.

PÈRE MONTMOREL.

*Sermon on 16th Sunday after Pentecost.*

. . . . .

When God created the world He worked for six days, after which Scripture says that He rested on the seventh. But in what consisted this rest of God? Here it is: "And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good." God took a general review of all His works, and found them to be good and perfect. He found His rest in His approval. This is what we should imitate.

Leave off your servile work, and take a survey of your conduct throughout the past week. See if you can say with God, that all that you have done during these six days is good. Examine if you have been faithful to God and your neighbour; if you have fulfilled the duties of your state of life; if there has been any injustice in your employment or business.

After this examination, give your approval to that which has been good, rectify that which has been faulty, and consecrate the rest of the day in renewals of love to God, so that He may be propitious to us. Do this also, in reparation for the many dissipations you have complacently indulged in.

*Discours Chrétiennes.*

## 52.—On Fastings and Abstinence.

LE PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

“Prayer with fasting is holy and pleasing to God.”

—TOBIAS xii. 8.

THE lesson which the Son of God teaches us in the desert shows us, that the best methods of resisting temptations are by fasting and mortification of the body.

Subdue the flesh, and you weaken the devil; for he can do nothing, if we deprive him of his weapons.

Let it not be said that fasting and mortification are intended only for religious bodies; for since our Saviour has deigned to make use of this remedy (although He had no need of it), there is no one of whatever rank or condition can be dispensed from this obligation.

If persons of quality, or people in business, were exempt from the temptations and attacks of the evil one, it might be allowable to treat their bodies delicately; but since the enemy tempts them more than others, they require ever to be on the defensive, and consequently fasting, is to them the more necessary.

The chief object of fasting is to mortify the body, to deaden the passions, and to keep the soul in a state of grace.

To live then in pleasures and gaiety during the holy season of Lent, and to continue in sin, is contrary to the spirit of fasting, and to the intentions of our holy mother the Church.

How miserable are they who poison so efficacious a remedy, and who deliberately refuse to make use of a cure which the Church gives them, for the purpose of overcoming the world, the flesh, and the devil!

As the first man was condemned for not having abstained from eating, notwithstanding the express command of God, so the Creator has fixed on fasting as a reparation for this first sin. It is the best means of avoiding the consequences of original sin, the best remedy to restore peace of mind, to control the passions, and to bring our flesh under subjection.

Over-eating and over-drinking have made the devil victorious throughout the world, but fasting drives him away; for does not St. Matthew say in his Gospel (*chap.* xvii. 20) that "this kind is not cast out, but by prayer and fasting"?

We read in the annals of ecclesiastical history of an edifying circumstance which occurred in Constantinople under the reign of the Emperor Justinian. It is therein related that this city was visited by a terrible famine, and that the season of Lent having come round, before God had withdrawn the frightful scourge, the Emperor caused all the meat-markets to be thrown open, and he issued an edict to the effect, that he granted leave from abstinence during Lent for that year only.

But how do you think so humane and considerate an order was received by the people? Oh! happy age! Oh, my God, is there a spark now left of this ancient fervour? Would you believe it, ye Christians of the nineteenth century, that in this vast city, weakened as it had been by so dire a calamity, there was not to be found a single Christian, I say not one, who wished to take advantage of the favour granted. And yet this was not all; for no sooner was the dispensation published, than the whole body of Christians besieged the palace,



and implored the Emperor to revoke the edict, and restore the old laws, since they were ready to die rather than break them.

Not to speak of those who absolutely refuse to obey the precepts of the Church, there are many, alas! who seek for dispensation from abstinence, &c., without any reasonable excuse; and it is my firm belief that of those who ask for leave without necessity, there would not be found one single person who properly fulfilled the Easter obligation.

What! ye pleasure seekers, during the forty days you have continued in the same sins, nay added sin to sin, deliberately and with all the coolness, that acts of so long a duration cannot fail to have; and yet you wish me to believe that all of a sudden, perhaps in a single night, your heart is so changed that it detests the past frightful dissipations, and that the horror of the excess, equals the pleasure you had in committing sin.

Were you on your death-bed, I would question the sincerity of your contrition, after committing sins so recently, so openly, and after showing such a manifest contempt of the precepts of the Church.

And now, that you are in good health, you would wish to persuade me that you are willing to begin afresh, if the fast recommenced, and you wish to persuade me to believe that your repentance is sincere.

As for myself, I believe it to be false, and I should hesitate to pronounce the absolution, for fear of profaning the precious Blood of our Lord, unless indeed I saw that you were ready to fast for forty days after the feast, as a proof of your repentance.

REV. PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.

## 53.—On the Sacrament of Baptism.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM, PÈRE NEPVEU,  
and ST. LEO.

“Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”—MATTHEW xxviii. 19.

LET us try to preserve the noble birth which we have inherited from our baptism.

If an earthly potentate had found you poor and begging, and had suddenly adopted you as his son, you would soon forget your past misery, you would no longer think of your lowly hut, however great may have been the difference between these things.

Think, then, no more of your first state, since the one to which you have been called, is comparatively more illustrious than regal dignity; for he who has summoned you, is the King of angels, and the property He has reserved for you is not only far beyond our comprehension, but even beyond all that words can express. He does not help you to pass from one station of life to one higher, as this Potentate could have done; but He raises you from earth to heaven, from a mortal life to an immortal life, a life so glorious and inexpressible that it will not be known, until we gain possession of it.

How then, being partakers of these grand blessings, can we presume to think of the riches of this world, and how can we trifle away our time in frivolous and vain amusements? What excuses will remain, or rather what punishments ought we not to suffer, if, after having received so

wondrous a grace, we should return to that first condition from which we have been so fortunately—ay! so mercifully—withdrawn?

You will not be punished simply as a sinful man, but as a rebellious child of God; and the lofty eminence of the dignity to which you were raised, will only serve to increase your punishment.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

*From Sermon xii. on St. Matthew.*

. . . . .

What is it to be a Christian?

It is a man who has a close affinity with God, and through baptism becomes His Son. What more exalted, what more grand! What Jesus Christ is by nature, the Christian is by adoption. He receives through spiritual regeneration, the likeness of that which the Word receives through eternal generation. We have received, says St. Paul, the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we dare to call God our Father, and, if sons, heirs also.

The birth of Jesus Christ in Mary, says St. Augustine, is the model of our second birth, which is made through baptism. They proceed from the same source, which is the Holy Ghost: one was made in the bosom of Mary, who is virgin and mother, and the other is made in the bosom of the Church, which is pure and fruitful. The end of the first is Christ, that is to say, a Man-God; the end of the second is a Christian, that is to say, a man-divine. God, says St. John, could He have carried His love and our happiness further than by making us really and truly children of God? Could we push our ingratitude and unworthiness further than by disgracing that glorious title by a behaviour, as criminal as it would be shameful?

A Christian is one who has a close affinity to Jesus Christ, of whom he is, through baptism, made a member.

What more glorious? All Christians, says St. Paul, are but one body, of which Jesus is the head. By this sacrament they become members which unites them to Him, by a genuine union, since it forms an article of faith; by a very real union, since the Holy Ghost is its source; an intimate union, since we are animated by the spirit of Jesus Christ we dwell within Him—a union, in short, sublime, since the Redeemer compares it to the union which He Himself has with His Father: *Tu in me, et ego in illis*. So that, as says St. Peter, we by that, become partakers of the divine nature.

If Jesus Christ, who obtains for us all these advantages, had not He Himself secured them for us, could we have believed in them? But if we do believe them, should we not have a more exalted idea of them, and ought not our conduct to be conformable to our belief?

Through baptism, a Christian becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost. Do you not know, says the Apostle, that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within you? Thus it is that the same ceremonies are made use of in baptism as in the consecration of churches. Through exorcism, the devil is expelled from the soul of him who is made a Christian, it is consecrated by the holy chrism, a figure of the anointing of grace by which the Holy Ghost spreads around the heart; it takes possession of it by that mysterious breathing of the priest who baptises; it then becomes the source and object of the worship, which the faithful pay Him in that temple, through acts of faith, hope, and charity. It is that Holy Ghost who prays in him, by moanings so efficacious; and it is on account of that, they are so very meritorious, that they are able to impart an undoubted right to the possession of God. Could God honour man more than by making him a child of God, brother of a Man-God and a temple of the Holy Ghost? Also, St. John tells us, that through

baptism, we enter into fellowship with the Father, and the Son, and consequently with the Holy Ghost.

What glorious fellowship! What exultation! What happiness!

LE PÈRE NEPVEU.  
“*Reflexions on Chrétiennes.*”

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Through the Sacrament of Baptism you become the temple of the Holy Ghost. Take care not to drive such a guest away by your sins, and thus become a slave of the devil; because the price of your redemption, is the precious Blood of Jesus.

Acknowledge your dignity, O Christian; and, having been clothed with a nature quite divine, do not return, I entreat you, to your old vileness, by leading a life, which would lower the rank to which you have been raised.

Remember whose chief and body you are the member of. Remember that, having been withdrawn from the power of darkness, you have been transferred to the light of the kingdom of God.

ST. LEO.  
*On the Nativity.*

## 54.—On the Sacrament of Penance.

BOURDALOUE and PÈRE MASSON.

“He that hideth his sins shall not prosper ; but he that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy.”—PROVERBS xxviii. 13.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM, in his fifth homily on the Epistle to the Corinthians, asks, Whence comes it that we confess our secret sins, and that on this depends our judgment? The judges of the land do not act thus, for they never pass sentence or deliver their judgment until there is a verdict.

But, says the saintly doctor, we have rules which earthly judges have not ; for we do not profess to punish as they do, but are content to submit to the Church, who imposes a penance for their crimes.

The Royal Prophet, wishing to avert the anger and justice of Almighty God, asks for mercy and pardon : “Have mercy on me, O God ! according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.” It is thus he cries out and implores that pardon and mercy, which washes and purges so that no stain or soil may remain : “Wash me yet more from my iniquity.” And why ? because he has confessed his sins and acknowledges the enormity of his offences : “Because I know my iniquity.” Why say “because” ? says St. Chrysostom. Because he acknowledges his fault, he wishes God to forgive him. Is that justice ? Nevertheless, it is the Royal Penitent who speaks. It is true, O Lord, that the confession of my sins is an easy atonement ; but You are content with this, I do not offer any other, and I have no other way open to be reconciled with You. Pardon my sins, because I acknowledge and confess them.

Confession is a fountain of grace: *Haurietis aquas in gaudio de fontibus salvatoris*. What does the devil do—he who is the mortal enemy of our salvation? He sees that confession is a pure fountain, and he seeks to poison its waters; by the bad use he tempts us to make use of it, or by the hardness of heart he instils into our mind not to go to confess at all, and in this way he acts as did Holofernes in the city of Bethulia, who broke all the conduits and drained the fountains in order that the Israelites should die of thirst. It is thus that the devil tries to dry up the canals of the Sacrament, from whence flows the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. He, too, gives us a disgust of confession, and makes us turn away from it; he whispers that there is great danger of using this Sacrament badly; he suggests the disadvantage of performing the act badly. He tells us not to approach too often; he does not tell us to make frequent good confessions, but he persuades us that we may sometimes go to keep up appearances, or out of human respect, but he does not say that frequent confession is good, if it be accompanied with a good and pious motive.

In addition to the grace which is attached to the Sacrament to prevent our falling back, what power has not a prudent confessor on those souls, who are resolved to be under his direction? What will he not do when he knows how to win their confidence, and what pains will he not be compelled to take, to secure the perseverance and salvation of the souls intrusted to his guidance? What injustices in trade will he not try to rectify, and what foolish engagements will he not break off? What zealous care will he not take to root out the most violent passions, what resentments will he not stifle, what reconciliations will he not effect, when he sees any family disagreements? He will be the medium of making souls unselfish; he will cause many to renounce usury and avarice, and persuade

others to make restitution for ill-gotten goods. This is what a good director can do, and what a zealous confessor aims to do.

We must also add that frequent confession is a powerful curb on the conscience, and fosters the duty of the holy fear of God; so that a man has not an idea of returning to sin, when he thinks of the pain and shame of confessing it. This thought produces nearly the same effect as the preparation for death; for it makes us remember that we ought to appear in the tribunal of penance, as if we should be summoned to stand before God to be judged.

What more can be said? The sweet use of confession redeems a soul from sins, and so invigorates the will that the most violent temptations are successfully resisted. How different the fate of those who shake off the yoke of confession, or who go to confession but very seldom, or those who abandon themselves to all kinds of disorderly sins?

BOURDALOUE.

*Sermon on Confession.*

. . . . .

If you love the beauty of your soul, says St. Bernard, cherish confession. It is that, that re-ornaments it, and renews all the traces of beauty which had been tarnished by sin. But why? one may say. What does God want with a verbal declaration? Does He not read our hearts? does He not see all that passes? Ah! says the saint, He demands this confession—*non ut agnoscat sed ut ignoscat*—not but that He knows better than we do, for He sees the innermost recesses of our consciences, but that He may be able to forgive us. It is sufficient to lay bare all our wounds, that He may cure them; it is sufficient to accuse ourselves, that we may be excused; it is sufficient that we should condemn ourselves, in order to be absolved. Can confession offer more advantageous blessings?

LE PÈRE MASSON.



## 55.—On Holy Communion.

PÈRES CASTILLO, VAUBERT, and ST. CPYRIAN.

“Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.”—JOHN vi. 54.

[MATTHIEU DE CASTILLO was born in Palermo in the year 1664. He entered the order of St. Dominic in 1679, taught theology with great success, and was esteemed as an excellent preacher. This religious died in the year 1720, leaving behind him several works of merit, among which may be named a Funeral Panegyric on Père Ange-Marie, a Franciscan monk, and an abridged Life of St. Vincent Ferrier.]

IT is the opinion of St. Thomas and of all subsequent theologians that venial sins are remitted by the power of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, if received in a state of grace. Pope Innocent goes further that this, for he assures us, that a fervent communion will prevent us from falling into mortal sin, inasmuch as it enables us to keep in a state of grace; because, says the saintly doctor, as corporeal nourishment strengthens the system, and renews fresh vigour in the body, so in like manner the constant use of the spiritual food, Holy Communion, imparts a strength of will, which before was weakened by sensuality or by venial sins.

To this may be added that, as habitual venial sin decreases the fervour of charity, therefore, in order to renew and re-enkindle our devotion, nothing is more beneficial, no cure more certain, than the devout reception

of Holy Communion. It is a daily remedy against our daily infirmities, so says St. Ambrose.

St. Bernard says, If there be any among you who has experienced a change of heart and will; if you have no innate desire for or delight in the things of this world; if anger, envy, sensuality, or any other vice should be deadened in you; if these do not tempt you, or if they do not disturb your mind or conscience, do not be vain-glorious in these victories, but return thanks to Jesus in His sacrament of love. "Because the virtue of this sacrament will work within you," continues the saint. It is the strength and power of this adorable sacrament which has metamorphosed many a worldly man to a fervent servant of God.

To those who, after Holy Communion, fall soon into mortal sin, I implore them to consider with what zeal the holy Fathers have inveighed against such relapses, and in what terms they speak of the awful consequences resulting therefrom.

To return after receiving communion to your former state of sin, is, they say, to profane the temple of the Holy Ghost, to dishonour the mystical body of Jesus Christ; it is to follow the example of Judas, to betray Him and to deliver Him up to His enemies.

The Body of Christ has been intrusted to you, says St. Athanasius. You are His temple, and He dwells within you. What do I say? You have become a member of His Body; treat Him with respectful love, and do not betray Him as Judas did.

In many passages, St. Chrysostom has displayed his eloquence, when he strongly recommended purity of life, after the reception of Holy Communion, and when he represents to his flock the enormous sin committed by those who easily return to their former state of tepidity.

[LUKE VAUBERT was born at Noyon in 1644, and entered the Society of Jesus on the 21st of September 1622. After his novitiate, he was made professor of the humanities, rhetoric, and philosophy. He was afterwards elected as Rector of the College of Louis-le-Grand in Paris, and therein died on the 15th of April 1716. Among his spiritual works, the one entitled "Devotion to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist," is the best known, and has often been reprinted.]

O my divine Saviour ! how sorely grieved am I, when I think how unworthy I am, and how I have hitherto abused Thy excessive goodness. How often have I wandered from Thee, I who have been more debased, more ungrateful than the prodigal son.

But if I have imitated him in his folly, I, following his example, return to You, overwhelmed with shame, and I hope that You will receive me, with the same tenderness as his father received him. I could say indeed with more truth, that I do not deserve to be treated as one of Your children ; but I know Your tender heart, and since You have deigned to will that I should partake of the Bread of Angels, I dare to believe, that Thou wilt look on me, and receive me as one of Thy servants.

L'ABBÉ VAUBERT.

We ask daily for bread, for fear that being deprived of it, and by not receiving it in Holy Communion, we should be deprived of the mystical Body of Christ.

He who abstains from receiving Holy Communion, and separates himself from the body of the Lord, has much reason to fear, for he withdraws himself, at the same time, from eternal salvation ; for does not Christ say, " Unless you eat of the Son of man, you shall not have life in you " ?

ST. CYPRIAN.  
*On the Lord's Prayer.*

## 56.—On the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrifice.

L'ABBÉ FLÉCHIER.

“And the altar shall be sanctified by my glory. I will sanctify also the tabernacle of the testimony with the altar.”—EXODUS xxix. 43.

THE Mass is a sacrifice, that is to say, it is a supreme worship, a real immolation, a public recognition of the sovereignty of God, and a sincere protestation by some visible ceremonies of the intimate and necessary dependence of our existence on a Superior Being, which can be but God alone. For, my brethren, recollect that we believe, that we are rendering to the angels, martyrs, saints—to the Mother of God herself, raised in dignity above the angels, and in merit above the saints—that we are rendering, I say, a homage which has been reserved for them as an inheritance, and as a regal mark of adoration which is due to Him.

The Mass is a sacrifice instituted by Jesus Christ, says St. Cyril, having an immutable priesthood, consecrated by an everlasting unction from all ages, in erecting the new law has established this sacrifice of His Body and Blood—a precious monument of His infinite love for men.

It was on that fatal night, when He was to be delivered up to His enemies, that He offered Himself to His Father under the species of bread and wine, being both together, says St. Paulinus, both the priest of His victim and the victim of His priesthood; then enjoining His apostles, and those priests who legitimately succeeded them, to do the same, even to the consummation of the world.

. . . . .

There is, then, in the Church a divine sacrifice, which the Council of Trent has designated as the highest work

of God—*opus Dei*; divine in its beginning, God alone, by His Almighty power, being capable of changing the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; divine in its midst, God alone becoming man, in order to be a victim fit to appease the anger of a sovereign majesty; divine in its end, God alone being able to be the object of those everlasting testimonies and of that divine oblation; divine in its duration, as the prophet Daniel had predicted.

It is not composed, as formerly, of many victims, but of one only, which is perpetuated on our altars; which is multiplied without being divided, which is sacrificed without dying, and eaten without being consumed, since it is the immortal and impassible Body of Jesus Christ.

It is the same God who speaks through His prophet Malachias. Listen to Him with docility and respect: "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles. I see in every place altars, whereon is offered to my name a clean offering" (*Malach. i. 11*).

What, then, is that victim which the Lord even so honours, as to attract His attention and complacency, which is so pleasing through its purity and innocence? Is it that of animals, whose impure and coarse blood would render it far from agreeable? Can it be our works, wherein malice is so often mingled, where flesh and blood have a share, where concupiscence is almost always mixed up with secret vanities or petty interests? Can it be our prayers, which are but too often accompanied with distractions, disgust, impatience, and self-love? No, doubtless. This glorious sacrifice, is that of the Mass, which is offered up in every quarter of the globe for the propitiation and satisfaction of our sins; this oblation is of itself so pure and holy, that neither the unworthiness of him who offers it up, nor the irreverence of those who assist at it, can in the least degree deprive it of its holiness.

We all meet in the church to give a public testimony of our faith and piety, and the visible sacrifice which is offered at the Mass is the sign of the invisible Sacrifice; so, says St. Augustine, modesty and a devout posture of the body ought to be the sign of our devotion and interior reverence. It is there we go to confess Jesus Christ before men, so that He may acknowledge us before His Heavenly Father. Where is it that we ought to give outward signs of that respectful fear, but in the presence of that divine majesty of God, residing in the tabernacles of His church? Our sole occupation should consist in adoring God, and acquitting ourselves well, in all our religious duties to Him, to whom we are so indebted.

Besides, we are obliged to give edification to all the faithful; and if we are at all times, and in all places, expected to show a good example, surely it is at the church during the celebration of the divine mysteries that we should do so.

Nevertheless, how many profanations and irreverences are daily committed during Holy Mass? How many attend carelessly and thoughtlessly, although God bids us tremble when we place our feet on the threshold of those venerable piles, wherein religion and its mysteries are set apart for worship?

Many enter the church thinking only of useless trifles, foolish appointments, or frivolous amusements; they look out for a Mass which they suspect will be a short one, as if they begrudged the short half-hour they give to Jesus every week.

Many wait to attend the latest Mass, in order that they may be more intimate and friendly with those who are equally undevout and lazy. They let the priest go away, or, perhaps better to say, they leave Jesus as if they had taken no heed of His sacrifice; and, far from having any feeling of devotion, they have deprived those who had, by the distractions they have given them.

## 57.—On the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrament.

FATHER FABER, PÈRE GARNIER, and ST. CYPRIAN.

"Verily, thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour."

—ISAIAH xlv. 18.

THE Blessed Sacrament is a mystery of daily repetition, of ordinary familiarity. We are coming across our Lord continually. Either we are calling Him from heaven ourselves, if we be priests; or we are witnessing that unspeakable mystery; or we are feeding on Him and seeing our fellow-creatures do so also; or we are gazing at Him in His veils, or receiving His benedictions, or making our devotions at His tabernacle door.

Yet what is our habitual behaviour to Him in this mystery? We are orthodox in faith, doubtless; every word of that queen of councils, the blessed and glorious assembly of Trent, is more precious to us than a mine of gold. But have the intensity of our love, the breathlessness of our reverence, the earnestness of our prayers, the overbearing momentum of our faith, the speechlessness of our yearning desires been all they should have been, or half they would have been, if we had but corresponded to the grace which He himself each time was giving us?

There is no sign of lukewarmness more unerring than becoming thoughtless about the Blessed Sacrament, and letting it grow common to us without our feeling it. Even though the disciples on the road to Emmaus did not know

Jesus till He vanished from their sight, at least their hearts, they knew not why, burned within them as they walked and talked to Him by the way. Yet how often have we been at the tabernacle door, feeling neither His presence nor our own miseries, more than a beggar sleeping in the sun at a rich man's gate?

True it is that the Blessed Sacrament is not a mystery of distance or of terror, but one of most dear familiarity. Yet the only true test of our loving familiarity is the depth of our joyous fear.

. . . . .

Yet, alas! whenever we read or hear of some of the great things concerning the Blessed Sacrament, does it not often flash upon us that our conduct is not in keeping with our creed; and, looking back on a long sad line of indifferent communions, distracted masses, and careless visits to the tabernacle, are we not sometimes startled into saying, Do I really believe all this?

How many of us might simplify our spiritual lives, and so make great progress, if we would only look to the Blessed Sacrament, to our feelings and conduct towards it, and its impression upon us, as the index of our spiritual condition? We are always trying to awaken ourselves with new things, new books, new prayers, new confraternities, new states of prayer; and our forbearing Lord runs after us and keeps blessing us in our changeableness, and humouring us in our fickle weakness. How much better would it be to keep to our old things, to hold fast by Him, and to warm ourselves only at the tabernacle fire!

FATHER FABER (Orat.)  
*Blessed Sacrament.*

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[JOHN GARNIER.—This renowned Jesuit professor of theology, was born in Paris in 1612, and died at Bologna in 1681, while on his journey to Rome, whither he had been summoned to wait on the Superior General of the Order. He was a true servant of God, full of piety and knowledge. His published works, testify to his being a man of superior attainment.]

Moses, desirous of making the Israelites understand how great was the happiness they possessed in being the chosen people of God, said to them: There never was a nation, however illustrious it may have been, who had gods so communicative, as is our God, who communicates Himself to us.

What shall we say to Christians when their loving and all-merciful God, not content with dwelling amongst us in our churches and visiting us in our homes, but has further willed to dwell in the interior of our souls, and to repose in our hearts as in a temple, where we can familiarly confer with Him and expose all our wants?

It was an incomparable joy for the Mother of God to have carried Jesus in her bosom;—has not the Christian the happiness of carrying Him in his?

St. Elizabeth esteemed herself happy when the Mother of God came to visit her, and the Lord himself is willing to come and dwell in the interior of our souls! Mary Magdalen had the advantage of kissing His feet, and we have the opportunity of embracing Him and of receiving His caresses! After that, what heart would not be inflamed with love for a God who so familiarly communicates with men? Ought not this induce us to offer to Him our fervent prayers, our fondest love?

Have we not indeed reason to reproach ourselves with coldness and ingratitude, when we think of the wondrous love which God has shown to men in this adorable sacrament?

As this God of love gives Himself entire to us in the

Eucharist, we ought to give ourselves entirely to Him. But, alas! how very far we are from loving Him as He has loved us in this divine mystery. He has loved us to excess, He has loved us without reserve, He has given Himself to us whole and entire, He has spared nothing to show us His love; nevertheless it is this same God whom we love with so much coldness and with so much reserve.

We give Him as little of our heart as we possibly can, and often give Him nothing at all; although that would not be a sin, still it would be indeed an act of a great ingratitude and greater meanness.

LE PÈRE GARNIER.  
*MSS. Sermon.*

. . . . .

The soul must be in an utter swoon, if it be not roused and enlivened by the Holy Eucharist.

We do not expose those whom we encourage to fight against persecution, or leave them devoid of help or even unarmed; but we fortify them with the protection of the Body and Blood of Christ, our Saviour. For is it not true that the Holy Eucharist raises the faithful above themselves, and from its efficacy, a worldly man becomes a heavenly man.

ST. CYPRIAN.  
*From his Epistles.*

## 58.—On the Sacrament of Matrimony.

LE PÈRE CORDIER.

“This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the church.”

—EPHESIANS v. 32.

[FRANCIS CORDIER for some years was a priest of the French Oratory. This congregation he, however, abandoned in the year 1680, and died in 1695. He has left behind him “The Manuel Chrétien” and a Life of the Carmelite Anne of the Angels. Both printed in Paris A.D. 1694.]

MARRIAGE may be said to be the nursery of mankind. From that are drawn daily new plants, in place of others which have withered and died away through length of time. This is a metempsychosis full of mystery, but is much more honourable and advantageous to mankind than that which some philosophers have imagined, who would revivify men from beasts and beasts from men.

Marriage shows that men are in some way immortal, for a father dies without dying, for he lives again in his son and in all his descendants. It is a fountain of life which ever flows, and is never exhausted.

Death is an abyss in which all men are engulfed, as rivers are lost in the ocean; but because that spring may never cease to flow, for one who dies, many are often brought to life.

Without marriage, death, which spares no one, whole cities would be ruined, whole provinces would be desolate. As nothing could check its violence, a century, and per-

chance much less, would suffice to hurry all men to the grave ; but God, who does not wish His work to perish before the number of the elect is filled up, has made Himself the Patron and Protector of marriages, as He has been the first Founder of them ; the same care He has taken to preserve the world induced Him to take in hand the marriages contracted therein, and which are the means of maintaining it.

That is the reason why the world is daily replenished with inhabitants, why new cities and towns become populated, why states and kingdoms flourish.

Could He, I say, have found a more effectual method to maintain and preserve so great a work ?

The strokes of death are continually at work, but do not annihilate, because the fruitfulness of marriage wards off every blow, and the grand design of God to refill heaven with His elect is effected by this means. I call it the grand design of God, because it is the climax of all others, and to which all aspire and tend to, as lines do to the centre.

This grand design could not be carried out in the order which God has willed to establish it without marriage, and this is the reason why He has willed to be its Author since the creation of the world.

Marriage is the first bond of everyday life ; it is the foundation and support of all human intercourse ; it is the beginning of every union. Every one should acknowledge it as the rock from which they have sprung. It is an agreement as old as the world itself, and its Author is no other than God.

The Gnostics, who have been the most shameless heretics that hell has ever produced, have rejected it as a bad and detestable thing ; but when we read in the book of Genesis that God was the Author of marriage, and when we read in the New Testament that God the Son honoured it by His presence, we should detest those infamous heretics

who have disapproved of it. It was not the honour and respect which they bore to the virtue of purity which made them speak, but the license of libertinism, which prompted them to keep as many women as they could seduce.

The Apostle's counsel to live single is not blaming or condemning the marriage state; for that can only be condemned by persons who have not a just appreciation of the works of God; but to teach us that it is not obligatory, and that we may increase in merit by renouncing one state of life by embracing another still more perfect.

The Church, which is ever guided by the Holy Ghost in all its ceremonies, retains a custom in all marriages which teaches those who receive this sacrament, the affection that they should have for each other. It directs the priest to bless a ring, presenting it first to the husband in order that by receiving it, he may encircle her in his heart and shut out all other loves. Then he places it on the wife's hand, in order that she may equally have no other affection for any man, than the one God has given her for a husband. This ring is a seal which should have a double intent on the hearts of the married couple, the first being to preserve inviolate sworn conjugal love, the second is not to allow an entry for any strange love.

Confidence is the result of a tried fidelity and a constant esteem. If this be necessary for all who are engaged in any kind of commerce whatsoever, what partnership can be more complete than marriage?

Concord, says St. Chrysostom, constitutes the maximum of the happiness and blessing of a married life; and if the husband can place his entire confidence in a good and virtuous wife, they will be as one body, one flesh.

LE PÈRE CORDIER.

*Selections from "La Sainte Famille."*

## 59.—On the World and its Dangers.

ST. AUGUSTINE, FLECHIER, and  
PÈRE CROISSET.

“If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him.”  
—JOHN ii. 15.

WONDROUS thing! the world is full of trouble, and we do not tire of loving it! What would it be were it always quiet? You attach yourself to this world, deformed and ugly as it is; what would it be were it always agreeable? You draw away your hand from the thorns of this world, what would it be if you had but to gather flowers?

Take care, the wind is violent, the tempest is terrible; each one has his own danger, for each one is tossed about with his own passions. Would you wish to know how to save yourself from this tempestuous sea? Love God, and you will walk upon its waters; you will tread under foot the pride of the world, and you will be saved. On the contrary, if you love the world you will be engulfed, for the world knows only how to shipwreck a soul, it knows not, how to save it.

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*Sermons lxxvi. and cviii.*

Would you know what happened to the great St. Benedict when he was in an ecstasy of prayer? He felt himself raised above himself; the heavens opened, and from an exterior darkness there came a kind of wondrous light, and the world was mirrored before him, and he, by divine

permission, was allowed to view the world, and it showed him at a glance, the nothingness and deformity of all human things.

Whether God had narrowed within the ray both heaven and earth, or whether He had enlarged his heart and mind, says St. Gregory, he sees revolutions and vicissitudes here below, creatures forced against their will to feed on vanity, and all the universe subjected to the covetousness of men. He sees, under cover of this celestial light, those grandeurs which are esteemed so highly, gradually decrease; he sees ambition, which takes so firm a hold on man, sink and fade away; that universal hypocrisy of the age, which elevates vice and makes virtue look contemptible,—where counterfeit miseries are cherished, where wretched pleasures are sought after. He sees a crowd of frivolous desires, hopes ill-founded, unjust hatreds, irregulated loves; he sees the wanton extravagance of our pleasures, the inutility of our occupations, the instability of our fortunes, the emptiness of our wishes, the littleness of our interests. Ah! how mean and contemptible did the world appear to him! No wonder that he despised it, and retired from it for evermore.

L'ABBÉ FLÉCHIER.  
*Panegyric of St. Benedict.*

. . . . .

Pleasure is a feeling of joy, which dwells in the soul during the existence of a blessing which is acknowledged as such.

Now this pleasure is only perfect so long as the blessing which causes it is sustained. An imaginary blessing could not know a real pleasure; its enchantments vanish in time, its illusions are soon dispelled; when the gratification of a blessing is deadened or exhausted, the mind and heart feel a void, and reason discovers, sooner or later, the depths of its nothingness, and at last bitter is the bitter-

ness where passion anticipates, but does not realise so much pleasure.

From that proceed those involuntary anxieties and vexations which all the joys of the world, however harmless, cannot drive away. From that arise those adversities, those little crosses, which put the most good-humoured out of temper, and which makes them say with truth, that worldly happiness is a myth.

As God alone can fill our heart, it is He who can satisfy our desires. Other objects amuse for a while, but they make our consciences uneasy, and, finally, they weary and disgust.

God alone can satisfy a soul, calm its anxieties, its suspicions, its fears, and every trouble that stirs within our hearts. Whenever I tried to fill up the aching void in my heart, said St. Augustine, I found that nothing equalled the happiness I felt, in trying to do my duty in serving God.

What are the miseries which worldlings have to endure? Alas! everything seems to conspire to make them groan without being allowed to complain. Continuous and fatiguing cares, inseparable from their state of life; ambition, jealousy, self-interest, inexhaustible anxieties; the uneasiness of a busy life, the fears of failure, the varied tempers of those in their employ—all of whom must be humoured—a hundred vexing accidents they are liable to, and which can rarely be prevented, the bad weather which they cannot avoid, a station of life which must at all risks be kept up, worry of competition, the malice of the envious, a heart ever agitated, an uneasy mind and conscience.

What! Does it require all these things to make a man unhappy? All such as these are, nevertheless, to be found united in the men who battle with the world.

PÈRE CROISSET, S.J.  
*Reflexions Spirituelles.*



## 60.—On the World and its Vanities.

ST. AMBROSE and MASSILLON.

"All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life."—JOHN i. 16.

[ST. AMBROSE.—This great saint and doctor of the Church was born about the year 340, and died on the eve of Easter-day in 397, aged fifty-seven. After the death of Auxence, Bishop of Milan, Ambrose was unanimously elected to succeed him, and this choice was confirmed by the Emperor Valentinian. At that time Ambrose was a catechumen, but after baptism he was ordained on December 17, 374.

The writings of this glorious saint have this advantage, that they please and instruct at the same time. They are as majestic and forcible, as they are full of divine unction. An edition of his works was published by the Benedictines of the Congregation of St. Maur in the years 1686 and 1670.

The *Te Deum laudamus* is attributed to him, though some say that it is the united composition of SS. Ambrose and Augustine. The name, however, of *Hymnus Ambrosianus* seems to be a proof that he alone was the author.

For particulars of his life, see Butler's "Lives of the Saints," Godescard and Giry.]

THE world which encompasses us is full of snares. One cannot dwell in it even for a short time without danger. You open your eyes, and the guard you thought you had over self is dispelled; you lend your ear to public discussions, and your attachment to party spirit breaks out; you walk in places strewn with flower-beds and flowers, and your thoughts wander on joys, &c.; you taste delicacies which are offered to you, and the poison of sensuality is

hid therein ; you extend your hand, and it is enough to cause an embrace.

Ah ! who can walk with a firm unshaken step in the midst of the passions of the world, amidst its seductive charms ? Let us then think and meditate on the words of Job, " The life of man on earth is a continual warfare."

ST. AMBROSE.

What, then, is this reprobate world, which you are obliged to hate from the time that you were regenerated by grace, and which you ought to continue to hate all your life ? For you the bright side is uppermost, and I have simply to say it is that, that you love.

The world, it is that raging sea, on which are tossed to and fro vessels containing a crowd of sinners, whose cares and projects depend on the fortunes or misfortunes of life ; whose aim seems to be to build palaces on sand ; whose hopes are fixed on the fleeting enjoyments of this life, who seek for joys and pleasures, which are a thousand times more fatiguing than they are worth.

The world is a monstrous assemblage of party spirits who revile each other, and regard each other with contempt, envy, and jealousy, void of honour and fair dealing. The world is a temporal kingdom which knows not Jesus Christ, where He himself declares that He is not, and for which He does not wish to pray. The world is that mass of wicked men and impious libertines, who refuse to believe in the truths of the gospel, because they wage war with their vices, because they confute the Saviour's maxims, despise His mysteries, ignore His precepts, and profane His sacraments. In short, the world is the majority who follow its maxims.

It is this world which you have to hate in your baptism, and which you are taught to confute, condemn, and wage war against.

This world, then, is the enemy of the cross, and of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and ought therefore to be with you, an object of horror, and which you ought to sacrifice to the interests of your salvation.

The first use we make of our free-will, is the choice of dangerous pleasures; the first temptation is, that of our passions, and our reason believes only on the wreck of our innocence. All the land is infected through the wickedness of those who dwell on it. One no longer sees, says a prophet, the existence of truth or charity; mercy is not there, and the knowledge of God is uncared for; all have overthrown the obstacles which preserved their innocence in their hearts.

Blasphemy, lying, injustice, adultery, homicide, perfidy, and other horrible crimes, have inundated the land, says a prophet; blood has tasted blood, the father scandalises his child, the brother lays snares for his brother, and the husband seeks for a divorce.

Among men there are no ties but self-interest, passion, ill-humour, and caprice. Crime is common among the noble and great, virtue is only meant for the simple-minded; piety is the lot of few; hatreds are eternal, and an enemy is never looked upon as a brother.

Thence arise those resentments one against another; the purest virtue is not safe from slander; lawsuits and vexatious actions, and the meetings of friends and relations, are no longer public censures on public morals.

Gambling of every kind, has become either shameful trafficking in shares, or that blind infatuation which often ends in the ruin of families, and almost always causes the loss of the immortal soul.

Those innocent bonds of society, family meetings, are now only attractions for the indulgence of intemperance. Balls, theatres, music-halls, have become schools of impurity, and the present age is so refined in luxury that the

carrying on shameful intrigues soon soil the soul, and of which our forefathers were not conscious.

The city, a sinful Ninive, where all follow the bent of their inclinations; the court is the centre of vice; the whole country, a frightful desert, where men, like so many wild beasts, tear and bite each other, and where hatred, envy, and ealousy are paramount.

What do I say? nothing but disorder and confusion are in the world.

MASSILLON.

*On the Small Number of the Elect.*

. . . . .

The world is more dangerous when it flatters us, than when it ill-treats us; we should be more careful of trusting it, when it invites us to love it, than when it admonishes us, and compels us to despise it.

The chains that bind us to the world, are pleasing to look at, but hard to bear; the harm they inflict is certain, the pleasure they promise very doubtful. Those who wear them are ever busy, but never exempt from dread.

They who follow the maxims of the world, experience nothing but misery, and the flattering expectation of happiness is delusive and vain.

Would you wish not to be an enemy of God? Do not be a friend of the world.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

*Epistles.*

## 61.—On the World and its Duties.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM and PÈRE TEXIER.

‘Fear God and keep His commandments ; for this is all man.’

—ECCLES. xii. 13.

THERE are still even now, through the mercy of God, many persons who live a Christian-like life, who keep God’s commandments, and who do not wilfully fail in any one of their duties ; and if you do not know this, I am not astonished at it, since Elias thought that he was left alone when God said to him, “I have left me seven thousand men, that have not bowed their knees to Baal.”

This example ought to convince us that there are still some amongst us, who keep themselves unspotted from the world, and who imitate the early Christians.

As for you, my brothers, if you have not as yet reached to that pitch of perfection, begin at least with the wish to aspire to perfection, cut off all inclination to do evil, resist the torrent of example, and do not think of doing any good, unless you set to work in a right and lawful way.

We see that St. John the Baptist at first recommends the publicans and soldiers to be content with their pay. His zeal would have willingly led him to raise them to a high degree of perfection ; but they, not being fit for much, he contented himself with giving them this simple advice, for fear that, by proposing something higher, they would not have been able to attain to a lower degree of perfection, much less to that height of virtue of which they were not capable.

It is thus that in the world there are different degrees of virtue ; as among those who are consecrated to the service of God, in the religious state, there are novices, others more

advanced, and others who reach to an eminent degree of sanctity.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

*Homily on the Sixth Chapter of St. Matthew.*

. . . . .

You are married ; Moses was married too. What, then, should prevent you from retiring every day, as he did, to confer with Almighty God on the important affair of your salvation, and to pray for His grace ? You have children ; the mother of the Machabees had seven of them, and that did not prevent her from being holy, and, when called upon, preferred the love of God to that of her offspring. You are noble, and are required to keep up a certain splendour in the world. David, Joshua, and Ezechias were no less noble ; the government of states, and the guidance of underlings, did not hinder them from continually consulting God through prayer ; they kept themselves humble in the midst of their grandeur, and they resided with their court, without being infected by its vices.

You are a judge ; that obliges you to practise virtue so much the more. That was just the case with the matchless Samuel. Follow his example, and on your bench you will be reproachless, and your position will afford opportunities of practising the most heroic virtues. You are rich ; Abraham perhaps was richer than you are. Well, like him, be the father of orphans, the entertainer of strangers, the defender and feeder of the needy, and your riches will help you to become a great saint.

You are poor, and your poverty brings on you illnesses and cares. Look at poor Lazarus, his poverty sanctified him, and he is placed on Abraham's bosom. You are a workman, and you are compelled to toil all the day, and part of the night, to support your family. St. Joseph, the glorious husband of Mary, was he not a workman ? and, in the exercise of his trade, through his incomparable

virtues, is now one of the highest saints in heaven. You have joined the army; call to mind that brave officer, of whom the Gospel speaks, who went to war as you do; and nevertheless you see that he was so full of faith, zeal, and charity, that the Son of God admired him and appeared to be surprised.

The inference that St. Chrysostom draws from this, is, to prove that, in whatever condition we may be, we can always observe the law of God.

God has given to all states and professions of life, a help and steady support when He promulgated His law. Keep this law in your heart, and it will strengthen your steps, however slippery may be the path through which you walk: *Lex Dei ejus in corde ipsius, et non supplantabuntur gressus ejus*. Amidst the worry of a family, the cares of business, and even the trouble and danger of war, the inviolate love of that law will keep your heart in peace, and there will be no scandal which can stop you: *Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam, et non est illis scandalum*. Would you live piously in your state of life? When you see the trickery and deceit that are practised in high places, the corruption so common in law courts, the usual trickeries in trade, exclaim with David: "Withdraw from me all those, that work iniquity."

The Son of God, who is the Supreme Judge, elevates the vilest conditions in His own supernatural way, and gives to all a sufficiency of sanctification. Thus, whether you are a gentleman, a judge, soldier, merchant, or workman, you are something more than all these, since you are a Christian, and that is the foremost and noblest of your qualities.

This is what Tertullian has said: It matters little what you may be or what profession you exercise, since, if you are a Christian, you are no longer of this world.

LE PÈRE TEXIER.  
*Lenten Discourse.*

## 62.—On the World, its Honours and Dignities.

PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE and  
ST. GREGORY.

"A most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule."

—WISDOM vi. 6.

THE great and noble have to breathe an atmosphere of sensuality. Born and bred in idleness and effeminacy, they nourish within, a hidden fire for all kinds of food which only feeds an ever-increasing appetite.

The world does not outwardly exhibit its attractions to the great, it simply offers them to their desires, and delivers them over to their own keeping, so to speak, despoiled of all the difficulties which repulse and frighten others.

There are few, doubtless, who have not sometimes cherished the passions of avarice, vengeance, or ambition; these passions blind those who possess them. Now, before a person who has no influence or power, with but little money or property, could find the means to gratify his passions, the danger he would have to encounter, the precautions he would have to take, all these in time, will open his eyes, and calm the agitated heart. On the other hand, a powerful and rich noble, who, having within his reach all that can satisfy his wishes, has no sooner conceived a base design than he puts it into execution, finding everything in readiness for him.

But what! must those who are in high places and have



plenty to spare, should they despair of their salvation? Certainly not; but they must work with fear and perseverance; they must, by fervent and constant prayer, try to draw down from heaven, that immense help which they stand so much in need of, in order to avoid the snares which surround them, and, by the frequentation of the sacraments, they may never cease to fortify themselves against the attacks of such formidable enemies.

Moreover, the noble are necessarily compelled, as they often are, to be richly dressed, to live in grand houses, expected to give luxurious dinners, to take part in the vain pleasures of worldlings; they should, I say, situated as they are, take especial care not to go beyond the mark that necessity and custom require.

When you act in this way, you will be able to say, that if you run any risk, that it is the providence of God which has placed you in the position in which you are in, and that it is through the goodness of God, that you have been able to avoid its dangers.

Yes, the high and mighty should anticipate a more rigorous punishment than ordinary mortals. *Fortioribus autem fortior instat cruciatio*, says the Book of Wisdom (vi. 9), which is, "A greater punishment is ready for the more mighty."

Why? In the first place, on account of their ingratitude to God, who has loaded them with temporal blessings, which He has kept back from the rest of mankind; for not having found in them that thanksgiving which such blessings well deserved. Secondly, they will suffer much more than those, who have endured misery during this life, because those who have so suffered have, by the hardships they have patiently endured, expiated the greater part of their sins; whilst the rich and noble, who have always lived in luxury and plenty, not having paid any debt of justice to a merciful God, will find themselves accountable

and indebted for everything. In the third place, as there is nothing to hinder them from following the bent of their vicious inclinations, they the more easily and the more readily fall into sin, consequently the quality and quantity of their transgressions, will far exceed those committed by persons in the middle class of life.

In addition to that, they will not only be accountable for their own sins, but they will be answerable for those committed by others, whether it may be from their neglect of those under their care, or whether by their pernicious example they may have introduced, encouraged or authorised habits of vanity and vice.

But consider what thrones and mansions will not God prepare for those who, by the practice of heroic virtues, sustain and even increase their merit in the midst of a corrupt court ! What praises will not He reserve, for those who have practised humility in the midst of honours and dignities, a spirit of poverty in places where riches abound, an aversion for pleasure where pleasure is ever sought for, an inviolate purity in an infected atmosphere, in a world which is full of tempting snares, a persecuting world, a world which sneers at virtue, and, in a word, which glories in incontinency.

LE PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.

. . . . .

The honours paid to the wicked only hasten their ruin.

The power of the wicked is likened, in Holy Scripture, to the flowers of the field ; because no sooner does worldly splendour outshine other lights than it fades and perishes, no sooner has it reached its height, than down it falls.

ST. GREGORY.  
*Moral VII.*

## 63.—On Mortal Sin.

PÈRES TEXIER, BERTHIER, and ST. CYPRIAN.

"Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent. The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the soul of man."—ECCLES. ii. 3.

SIN is a monster conceived in the darkness of error, and born amidst the malice of deceit. "Error and darkness are created with sinners; and they that glory in evil things, grow old in evil" (*Eccles.* xi. 16).

God alone, has the light to pierce into that gloomy abyss, in order to discover sin as it is; it is the Uncreated Spirit, says St. Paul, who, immersed in the depths of the Divinity, can penetrate into the mire of the malice of sin; and as there is but the immense capacity of the knowledge of God, who can comprehend what He is, and the honour which is due to Him, so there is only His perfect intelligence, which can form a true estimate of the enormity of mortal sin.

We can well say with St. Ignatius the Martyr, that sin is a cursed child of Satan, who transforms us into so many devils, as the grace of God is a seed of the Divinity which makes us participators of the divine essence. We can say with St. Denis, that it is a deprivation of beauty, life, and reason; with St. Augustine, that it is a universal overthrowing of mankind; with Tertullian, that it is a detestable preference of the devil, to the sovereign majesty of God; with St. Anselm, that it is a sacrilegious robbery of the sceptre and crown of God; and finally, with St. Paul,

that it is a renewal of the crucifixion of Jesus—*Rursum crucifigentes Filium Dei*.

We say, however, that mortal sin is the entire extermination of grace, the death of the soul, the corruption of human nature, the horror of heaven, and the desolation of the land. But after having said all this, after having compared it to the most detestable and pernicious of earthly things, after having exhausted all the terms that eloquence can command,—we are obliged to confess, that we have given but a faint idea of that boundless evil which is the cause of every evil, and whose malice is beyond the comprehension of angels and of men.

I am well aware that Holy Scripture teaches us, that the sinner drinks in iniquity like water; but I learn also from the prophet Ezechiel that he drinks a deadly poison, which tears his very entrails and kills him: *Anima quæ peccaverit, ipsa morietur*. That the sinner flatters his vices willingly, that he idolises his guilty passions—these are the serpents which cruelly bite him. “Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent” (*Eccles. xxi.*) Yes, mortal sins, are furious lions, whose cruel teeth kill his soul. “The teeth thereof are the teeth of a lion, killing the souls of men” (*Eccles. xxi.*) Yes, that property unjustly acquired, those adulteries, those inordinate pleasures, in a word, all those iniquitous deeds are, at the judgment tribunal of God, nothing else but a double-edged sword, with which the distracted sinner kills his soul and body—his soul by the loss of grace, and his body by depriving it of the right of a glorious resurrection. “All iniquity is like a two-edged sword, there is no remedy for the wound thereof” (*Eccles. xxi.*)

In fact, if we have no faith on this subject, here is an evident proof of it. Every reasonable man fears the death of his body, says St. Augustine, but scarcely any one fears the death of his soul. People work, perspire, and fret them-

selves to prolong a life which must soon end; and they wish to do nothing to avoid sin, that is to say, to lose a life whose nature is immortal.

What do I say? not wish to prevent the loss of his soul! Alas! the number of these madmen is incalculable, who sharpen the sword that gives the death-blow to their souls. Who will give me the feelings of the saints, as well as their words! I hear a St. Cyprian exclaim indignantly: What! if the news of the death of a parent or dear friend reached you, you would weep and sigh bitterly, you would outwardly manifest your grief. O hard-hearted sinner, I tell you from God, that that slander, that black calumny, that infamous deed has killed your soul, and you appear to think nothing of it.

LE PÈRE TEXIER.  
*Lenten Sermon.*

[WILLIAM FRANCIS BERTHIER was born at Issondun, in Berry, on the 7th of April 1704. In 1722 he joined the Society of Jesus, and distinguished himself as a virtuous and learned ecclesiastic. Towards the end of 1762, he accepted the appointment of Keeper of the Royal Library; he also assisted in the education of the unfortunate Louis XVI. Two years after this, he withdrew from public life and devoted the remainder of his days to study and to his religious duties. He died at Bourges on the 15th of December 1782.]

If the Almighty had never visibly punished the enemies of the faith, men might have imagined that God was indifferent to what was going on in the world; and if God should punish every sinner, during their lifetime, one might have thought that the effect of divine justice exercised here below, would lead to the belief, that there was no future state, and all would be annihilated, according as the human race disappears.

What God has done at different times against the wicked,

is the testimony of what He will do, some day, against all those who have so abused His patience.

If the sinner wishes to ponder on his condition, let him recall to mind Sennacherib, Pharaoh, Antiochus, and many others who have been struck by God's all-powerful arm. History does not tell us of how many more, perhaps much more guilty, who have finished their career in an awful manner; but divine justice is ever the same, and if it has been delayed during life, it has overtaken them when they have ceased to breathe.

Reason is here in accordance with religion. The words of the prophet against Sennacherib is a divine oracle, but a revelation of light is sufficient to discover this truth.

Oh, unjust man! oh, thou who sheddest the blood of thy equals! thou shalt one day be crushed with the weight of thine iniquity; thou layest waste to all the land, and thou in thy turn, shalt be laid low; thou despisest all laws, and thou in thy turn, shalt be covered with confusion.

LE PÈRE BERTHIER.  
*On Isaiah.*

. . . . .

Look at the havoc which hail and storm spread around our gardens and orchards; look at the rot fast spreading amongst the cattle; look at the winds and hurricane which toss the ships at sea. This is only but a feeble image of the ravages of sin in a soul.

Mortal sin destroys the merits of good works, corrupts every faculty of the mind, and leads the sinner on to certain death.

ST. CYPRIAN.  
*De Lapsis, V.*

## 64.—On Venial Sin.

PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE and SEGNERI, S.J

“He that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater.”

—LUKE xvi. 10.

THE same God who is offended with mortal sin—a God infinitely great and loving, the God to whom we are indebted for everything, and who has so often prevented us from falling into mortal sin—this same God, I say, is offended by venial sin.

It is true, that it may be a trifling fault, but this self-same venial sin, becomes in a way infinite, when it is committed against infinite goodness and majesty.

I know full well, that the faults which a subject can commit against his king are not always equally bad, but it is certain, that he will not overlook faults however trifling they may be. To make an attempt upon his life would, I grant, be the blackest of crimes, but to injure him purposely, by word or intention, would deserve a severe punishment.

We should call that child an unnatural monster, who would kill his own father; but he who has cherished the thought of injuring him, or of raising his hand against him, would he not be held in abhorrence by all the world?

O my God! how blind we are! These examples make us shudder, but we are not moved, when we look into our own consciences, and try to persuade ourselves that we are not so bad as they.

Let me, O Lord, constantly meditate on those parables, which represent to us Your blessings, and Your Majesty.

What is a king, what is the greatest monarch on the earth, in comparison with Thee, my God?

Every one knows, that when one gives way to any bad habit, it becomes daily more and more difficult to overcome, and that at last it quite gains the upper hand.

It is in this way, that all the most wicked of men, are lost,—not one of them ever commencing with a great crime. It is certain that if they attended to the first twinge of their conscience, they might still have been innocent; but when once they have paid no attention to inward warnings, it becomes morally impossible to arrest its downward progress.

This is the way the devil, who would not be satisfied if he did not deprive the sinner of the grace of God, never tempts him to begin by the commission of a grievous offence at first.

He is content, if he can feed the vanity of that young girl by inspiring her with a love of dress, and displaying the last new fashions, because he knows well, she will not fail to go further, and even without his interference, she will at last come to a bad end.

A person who simply wishes to abstain from mortal sin has not a very great desire to avoid it.

It is an idle fancy to suppose, that that plan of life which never fails to attend to great essential things without taking the trouble of taking precaution to avoid lesser evils, can be sufficient to ensure perseverance in the love of God. However venial my sins may appear to me, O Lord, they are attached to Thee—although they do not kill my soul. I am always in want of Thy Precious Blood to avert Thy justice, and they will never be remitted, unless a just proportion be kept between the evil and the remedy, the satisfaction and the injury. It is true that a sprinkling of holy water, taken with a feeling of true devotion, is sufficient to wash away the stains; that an alms distributed



to the poor can, in the sight of God, discharge many a small debt; that a fervent prayer can obtain a cure of my sins, and all that are called sacramental remedies, can help to staunch my wounds; but all-sufficient as these remedies may be, they would be inefficacious if they are not mingled with the wounds of our Saviour and supported by His merits.

It is necessary that that drop of holy water should be mingled with the tears He has shed over our miseries; that that alms should be united to the immense love, which led Him to shed His blood for our redemption, as says the Apostle; that that prayer be in union with those He addressed to His Father in our favour.

REV. PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

. . . . .

I acknowledge, O my God, that it is only by a constant and wearisome practice of little duties, that I can prove, exercise, and fortify my virtue for great occasions. I will henceforth be faithful to Thee in little things. It is only thus, that I can store up a treasure of merits for heaven.

What should I do? What could I suffer for you, O Lord, if I waited for great opportunities?

Alas! fatal experience has taught me but too often, that the lightest venial fault, diminishes the horror of sin; that it strengthens in my soul, an attachment to evil; that it is easy to fall when venial sins are disregarded.

FATHER SEGNERL  
*Meditations.*

## 65.—On Habitual Sin.

ST. AUGUSTINE, PÈRE BIROAT,  
and ST. BERNARD.

“I say unto you, that whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin.”

—JOHN viii. 34.

YOU tell me, that it is useless for me to try, for my bad habit has too strong a hold upon me; but I say, Watch over yourself, and you will soon be corrected. The more inveterate the habit is, the more it deserves your attention.

The tongue is a very quick and dangerous member, be then more attentive to restrain its volubility. If you try to-day, it will be easier to restrain it to-morrow. If your victory is not complete to-morrow, you will find that, by the efforts you made yesterday, your task is less difficult.

Vice expires in three days. We shall soon reap the fruit, and rejoice at the great advantage we have gained, by being delivered from so sad an evil.

I know full well, that it is difficult to break off a sinful habit, for I have myself experienced it, but, through the holy fear of God, I have conquered the habit of swearing.

When I read and meditated on His law, I was seized with fear; I fought manfully against my bad habit; I invoked the Lord in whom I trusted, and He gave me the aid I prayed for, and soon nothing appeared to me, more easy, than to refrain from swearing.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

*Serm. 307.*

P

When we begin to offend Almighty God, when the sin has not taken deep root, we can easily tear it out, just as it would happen to newly-planted trees. But when the earth has nourished its roots, little by little, they grow gradually and insensibly, they multiply their branches, they spread quickly, and become so deeply rooted that nothing but a tempestuous wind can break the tree or root it up.

Ah! such is the frightful state of the sinner. At the beginning, conversion is easy, his inclinations for evil, his attachment to sins, are not so strong, nor so numerous, nor so rooted within; but after years of continuous perseverance, his affection for sin is increased, his longings are multiplied, and his attachments become rooted. And nothing but the mighty stroke of God's all-powerful arm, can break his stony heart.

I could not better explain the difficulty of correcting habitual sin, or rather its moral impossibility, than by quoting the expressions of two Fathers of the Church, who make use of sentences, which at first sight appear to be contradictory, but on examination, they will both be found to be true.

The first is, St. Augustine, who says that habitual sin is a second nature, which man has created, and fostered, within himself, and that he has added it to the first which he had: *Consuetudo quasi secunda et affabricata natura*.

St. Ambrose says, on the contrary, that it is the habit which changes and excludes nature: *An ignoratis quantum vim habeat consuetudo peccandi, ut excudat naturam*.

Let us see how we can reconcile these two axioms.

When St. Ambrose says, that habitual sin excludes nature, he means that nature which had at first good dispositions, and which was not as yet corrupted by a multitude of sins; and when St. Augustine says that habit is a second nature, he intends to speak of that corrupted

nature, that terrible inclination to do ill, after we have lived for years, under the dominion of sin.

We have here a twofold difficulty—the difficulty of overcoming our first nature, which is so prone to evil, and that of the second nature, contracted by perseverance in sin.

This is what St. Augustine teaches. Ah, glorious saint! how well you knew, by experience, of those ill-regulated passions. When you say of yourself that you groaned in the midst of your bondage, *Suspirabam ligatis non ferro alieno, sed mea ferrea voluntate*,—I sighed in the midst of my passions, not under chains unknown, but in the fetters of those of my own forging. The devil actually kept my will fastened down, he had manufactured from my habitual sin, a chain to bind me, to retain me in his tyrannic power. From this commenced my misery, my helplessness; in giving way to my passions I had contracted a bad habit, and this sinful habit, passed to a second nature, and has reduced me to a dire necessity of adding sin to sin, and I felt that I had no power to throw off the chain.

PERE BIROAT.  
*Lenten Discourse.*

Habitual sin may be justly called the highest point of sin, since it causes the loss of the fear of God, and begets a contempt for His holy law. A sinful act, often reiterated, becomes a habit, habit engenders necessity, necessity becomes impossibility, impossibility is the mother of despair, and despair finishes its work, and seals its own damnation.

ST. BERNARD.  
*I Consideratio.*

## 66.—On Occasions of Sin.

MASSILLON and BOSSUET.

"And such of them as shall flee, shall escape."

—EZECHIEL vii. 16.

IT is a delusion to fancy that an occasion is necessary, when it is purely voluntary.

What is more usual, in the world, than to make excuses for a pretended necessity, merely because every one considers it to be the right sort of thing to do, and because self-love prompts us, to acquiesce in any imaginary engagement?

I am, says one, in a position of life, such as rank or station, which renders it impossible for me to avoid seeing or being seen, paying or receiving visits; how, then, should I occupy my time?

I am, says another, in an office, in a post of great responsibility, and it is really necessary for me to enter into particulars, however hazardous they may be for my salvation, however dangerous they may be for the purity of my conscience.

I grant all this. You must appear in society, you should have recreations, and ought not to be prevented from mixing in company. But is there not something over and above these amenities and rules? If your rank, condition, or position in the world should compel you to pay visits, however honourable or decorous they may be, what necessity is there for prolonging such visits? Why receive at your house people of all ages of different sexes? Why engage in every party of pleasure, promenade, or play? It is, that you wish to shine above others, to show yourself

off on every occasion, and thus you make amusement the chief occupation of your life.

What necessity is there, that if you must belong to a club or society, you should select the one most scandalous and worldly, one which only flatters vanity and engenders effeminacy? Why, of all theatres, you should select those where the most sensual exhibitions are given? What necessity is there, that you should always be in the company of those, whom you wish to please or who please you? What necessity is there, for encouraging the acquaintance of dissolute libertines, who unfortunately know no better, and are only capable of persuading you to join them in their evil course of life?

Would you wish to be shown the danger in which you are in, and the consequent misery which must result from these proximate occasions of sin?

They are only vain terrors, say you, which a confessor or director would wish to depict.

What! you do not call those clandestine interviews, unknown even to father or mother, a proximate occasion of sin? Those appointed meetings when the passions are so violent, and virtue is so weak, that it yields at last to the tempter? You do not call those free and easy conversations, a proximate occasion of sin, where intrigues are openly discussed, where the heart, more than the mouth, suggests many an expression capable of poisoning every sense of right? You do not call that an occasion of sin, when you write and receive letters wherein the heart is freely opened? You do not call that a proximate occasion of sin, that secret intercourse with a creature, and you do not deem it to be a guilty occasion to remain under the same roof with the object of your passionate love? You are deceived: *Exite de medio eorum, et separamini, dicit Dominus.* Withdraw from them and separate.

Separation, divorce; an entire separation, an imme-

diate divorce; leave the guilty object, and withdraw from him.

If you do not do this, you break the commandment of God and complete your condemnation.

MASSILLON.

*From a Sermon on this Subject.*

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[JAQUES BENIGNE BOSSUET, Bishop of Meaux, is one of the greatest pulpit orators that France has produced. Although many eloquent preachers have succeeded him, none have excelled him. Besides his sermons and magnificent funeral orations, he has written many volumes, which will always be read with interest. The best edition of his works is the one published by Lebel, in forty-three volumes 8vo, 1813. Bossuet was born at Dijon in 1627. After his first studies, he went to Paris in 1642, at the early age of fifteen, and ten years afterwards was vested with the doctor's cap at Sorbonne. Anne of Austria, the then Queen-Regent, gave him the post of chief almoner, and induced him to accept of the bishopric of Meaux in 1681. He died at the palace of his diocese in 1704, aged seventy-seven.]

You inwardly reproach me, O Lord, for having, like unto St. Peter, rashly exposed myself to danger, notwithstanding Your threats and prohibition, and notwithstanding the proper sense I should have had of my own weakness, with which You have often been willing to inspire me.

Relying on my own strength, I foolishly thought that those interviews, those occasions which have so often proved to be fatal, would not have injured me. I continued to associate with companions who were corrupt, slanderous, and impious, and I fancied that I could throw myself into flames without being burned.

Now, O my Saviour, I will follow the example of St. Peter, and will fly, cost what it may, from the dangerous society of those who sought my ruin; I will avoid every occasion of sin, and will weep bitterly for my poor soul, my tarnished innocence.

BOSSUET.

## 67.—On Frequent Relapses.

BOURDALOUE.

“And the state of that man, is made worse than the first.”—MATTHEW xii. 45.

THE chief misfortune that accompanies a relapse, is to withdraw God from us and to exhaust, as it were, His mercy, which although infinite in itself, still cannot be carried beyond bounds with regard to ourselves, and to the distribution of those special graces, as also those extraordinary helps on which our conversion depends.

“For three crimes of Damascus, and for four, I will not convert it” (*Amos* i. 3).

For the three first crimes of Damascus, said the Lord, through one of His prophets. The three first crimes, I have endured them, and have willingly forgotten them, but for the fourth, I shall not allow My justice and My anger to be passed by—why that? Because I was withdrawn from those wicked ones, who had angered Me by their infidelities.

Besides, from the moment that God withdraws His help—it is not to be wondered at, that penitence should become difficult, and that this difficulty should increase in proportion to the length of the withdrawal. Why? Because God alone can fill our hearts with the sense of His Divine Presence, and by diffusing the unction of His Holy Spirit, which can alone make our penances easy, and in the end make us love Him.

Can you find a more beautiful illustration of this, than that of the man so famed in the Old Testament, the invincible Samson? A guilty passion had blinded him; but



the blindness into which he had fallen, was not such to deprive him of that strength, with which God had so singularly and so miraculously endowed him. The stranger to whom he was so attached, had frequently attempted, by binding his limbs, to deliver him up to the Philistines; but he had always found the means to break his bands and recover his liberty. Hence he flattered himself that he would always be able to free himself from her treachery, and he said to himself: *Egrediar sicut ante*—I will go forth, as I did before (*Judges xvi.*) At last, that perfidious woman so cleverly employs her fascinating ways, that she cuts off that fatal hair, in which, by a secret mystery, all his strength was centred. The news was soon conveyed to the Philistines. They surround him unawares, and fall upon him in great numbers. He wished to be relieved, as he formerly had been, but he knew not that God had withdrawn His help from him: *Nesciens quod recessisset ab eo Dominus*—Not knowing that the Lord was departed from him (*Judges xvi.*)

Here, my dear brethren, you have the picture of a soul in that unhappy and miserable state, which usually succeeds to a wilful relapse into sin.

You will say on awaking from your deep sleep of indifference, and reflecting on your misery, you will say with Samson: "I will go forth as I did before." I will break my chains. I will make a vigorous effort, and I will free myself from a guilty passion, which has so long enchained me.

But you do not consider that God retires from you, and that in proportion as He retires, you are deprived of His aid; that penance then becomes a heavy burden, an insupportable yoke; and, whereas heretofore, it was a source of comfort to you, it now creates horror and disgust in your mind; for your frequent relapses have separated you from God, and have placed an almost insurmountable

barrier between you and your God: "Not knowing that the Lord was departed from you."

In truth, is it credible, that a man should have had a firm determination to renounce his sin, and then soon afterwards, cowardly and unresistingly (his sin being always before him) fall again into the same grievous sin? Ah, said St. Bernard, there is nothing stronger than our free-will; everything submits to it, everything obeys it. There is no difficulty which it will not remove, no opposition which it will not surmount, and what appeared otherwise impossible, becomes easy, when undertaken in earnest.

Now, this is true, in a particular manner, with reference to sin; for however depraved we may have been after all, we sin only, because we have the will to commit sin; and if we did not will to sin, it is indisputable, that we do not commit sin. So that, in this way, our free-will preserves a kind of sovereignty over itself, and participates in some measure of the divine omnipotence, as, in what regards sin, the will does only what it wishes to do, and that it has simply to consent, in order to overcome the power of not doing it. I am then inclined to think, that in reality, it has not the wish to resist, and renounce sin, when I see plainly that the subsequent wish is to resist but feebly, and in the end fails to renounce sin altogether.

This is the argument of St. Bernard, who cannot be suspected of Pelagianism, since he always acknowledges the efficacy of the grace of Jesus Christ, and is easily reconciled with what St. Paul said of himself when he complained, "that the evil which he would not, that he did"—*Sed quod nolo malum, hoc ego* (*Rom. vii.*), because by that, he understood and meant the involuntary motions of his heart; whereas St. Bernard speaks of the free consent which is given to sin.

BOURDALOUE.  
*Dominicale.*

## 68.—On Final Impenitence.

MASSILLON, DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.,  
and ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

"You shall seek me, and ye shall not find me, and you will die in your sins."  
—JOHN vii. 34

*VOCavi et renuistis; ego autem in interitu vestro ribebo, et subsannabo vos*—I called and you rejected Me, I also in My turn, will laugh you to scorn.

This is, at the same time, a reproach and a threat, which God makes to sinners.

I have waited, says He to them, until the time you asked Me for; I have permitted you to satiate those youthful passions, which you alleged as an excuse; I have allowed the fire of your passions to die out; I could have left you, at the very moment you abandoned Me.

Nevertheless I pitied you, and took compassion on your weakness. I delayed, and even tolerated, your long-continued neglect. I have even followed you to the last great feast, as you requested Me to do. I hoped that you would return to Me, that you would do something for your own salvation, nevertheless you have not fulfilled your promises.

My preachers have spoken with all that zeal which My glory and your salvation have inspired them; the ministers of penance have waited for you in the confessional; the treasures of My grace, and those of My Church, have been ever opened for sinners. In a word, I have waited for you to work out My justice: *Expectavi ut faceret judicium.*

But what has been the result, what the success of My patience? *Et ecce iniquitate*—it has been iniquity.

One day of penance and years of sin; a confession hurriedly, slovenly made, and a thousand relapses during the rest of your life—some trifling alms after a thousand injustices: *Et ecce iniquitas*. You have despised My grace, My warnings, My threats. “I also in my time will laugh you to scorn.”

. . . . .

That which keeps back the conversion of so many sinners is, that they want to wait for their conversion, until they are free from all hindrances, from businesses which occupy their whole time. When I have settled that lawsuit, says one; when I shall be free from all the cares of my numerous engagements, says another; when I shall have restored order and peace in my family, when I shall have provided for my children, when I shall have put by sufficient for the wants and comforts of my old age, then I will think of being good and of doing penance. This is how worldly people act. You wish to wait, in order that you may be free from every obstacle, free from all temporal anxieties.

Ah! you deceive yourselves, blind sinners; you will never reach to that freedom of mind, to that disengagement from everything; for you will always be slaves of habits which drag you down, and which will grow stronger in you more and more.

Well, if you wish to emerge from the darkness in which you are, do not delay one single moment when the voice of God calls you.

Although you may be still attached to the good things of this world, although you may cling to the corruptions of the age, although you may be slaves of a vice which tyrannises over you, listen to Jesus Christ, who speaks to

you, and when you hear His voice, arise from sin, as did Lazarus from the grave. Without that, you will perhaps never, never be converted.

. . . . .  
A change from bad to good is not effected in a moment. How great a change then must that be, from a bad life to a good death !

You know that the grace of a deathbed repentance, is the most extraordinary of all graces ; and still you think, that you have a right to expect it, you, who have brought yourself to be most unworthy of so great a grace ; unworthy, by that career of callous indifference of which you know all the baseness ; unworthy, by the knowledge of inspirations from heaven, which you have so many times misused ; unworthy, by the neglect of those blessed inward warnings from above ; unworthy, by that false and deceitful security which you have cherished, and which is the climax of all your sins.

I ask you, if there ever was a sinner who ought to expect from God the grace of conversion, would it be a sinner of your grade, and if there is much to fear for one sinner, ought you not to fear that the curse of Heaven would descend upon you, and that you would be rejected as a criminal too guilty to merit forgiveness ?

MASSILLON.

. . . . .  
A man, when he is at death's door, is like unto a city, besieged and vigorously stormed by the enemy. Every civil function is suspended ; courts of justice, schools, business, fine arts, are all suspended during that calamity ; every one runs to the ramparts to share in the common danger. So a person, the citadel of whose heart is besieged, with the pains of death, to make use of the prophet's expressions, thinks only of his pain ; his soul is entirely at

the mercy of those who torture the most; it is then, it must strive its utmost, to drive away an enemy, ready to make itself master of the place. During this temptation, it no longer sees nor hears, it only feels the pain; in that dread hour one hardly dares to call its attention to many important affairs, nevertheless it is the time reserved expressly for the only great affair, for an affair, on which hangs an eternity.

Woe to me! if I am so badly advised as to use my soul thus; woe to me! if I delay to the last moment of my life, that which should have been the occupation of my life.

DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.

. . . . .

Do not, I implore you, delay your conversion to God, for you know not the day appointed to carry you off.

You tell me that God has given His grace to be converted, to some when they have reached to extreme old age. Does it follow from this that He will grant you the same favour? Perhaps He will grant it to me. Why add, perhaps? Because it has sometimes happened. What! does the question of your salvation depend on a perhaps?

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

*Epis. ad Theod.*

## 69.—On Ambition.

PÈRES HOUDRY and CROISSET.

"They much preferred the glory of man, to the glory of God."

—JOHN xii. 43.

OF the chastisements inflicted by Almighty God on the ambitious man, there is no instance more terrible, than the fate and punishment of Nabuchodonosor.

The king ceased to be a prince, and, at the same time, lost his reason and his crown.

We read in the book of Daniel: "But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit hardened with pride, he was put down from the throne of his kingdom, and his glory was taken away."

He lost his speech, and was forced to bellow like the oxen, and did eat grass, and from the highest rank he was reduced to the lowest pitch of misery. He was driven from a palace wherein he formerly was idolised, and therein, was a sight never before witnessed in any palace of a king. The magnificent buildings which had been the unfortunate source of his pride, could only serve him, as a humiliating retreat; that majesty, which all obeyed tremblingly, was in the twinkling of an eye, deprived of every mark of honour.

One sought for Nabuchodonosor in vain. His children no longer knew their father, his subjects no longer recognised their king.

PÈRE HOUDRY, S.J.

. . . . .

Ambition is a passion which prompts men to raise themselves higher than their due. It is ever unjust, and insatiability becomes a part of its character.

What vice more hurtful to repose! Disdainful and

discontented, it despises all that is lowly, and recognises no equal. No vice is more hideous! Ambition seeks only its aim—no exertion and labour too difficult, provided it accomplishes its object. All roads to advancement appear to the ambitious man to be level. Ambition is his idol, and to this he sacrifices duty, friendship, gratitude, and scorns every law, human and divine. No passion more hard-hearted, more irreligious. What scheme does not the ambitious man resort to, to attain his object? Intrigues, quarrels, intercession, base flattery, all are made use of. The ambitious play many parts—now a friend, now a suppliant, but rarely that of an honest man, and still more seldom, that of a Christian man.

Conscience is disregarded, religion unheeded, and passion reigns supreme in the ambitious heart.

From this, arises failures, that total disregard of morality, and all that is sacred.

Ambition upsets, so to speak, the economy of providence. Opposed as it is to its designs, it follows and pursues its own plans and projects. It selects positions, procures dignities, seizes hold of the foremost place, seeks to displace others, and yearns to be higher, higher still.

The life of an ambitious man is spent in sighing after an imaginary fortune, a phantom of glory. His present state of life displeases him, if he sees an opportunity of obtaining a higher position, and which he flatters himself he has the ability to fill. To secure this, what measures will he not take, and to what meanness will he not resort?

One might say that the majority of mankind, seemed to imitate those rash children of Noah, who busied themselves in erecting a tower that would reach to heaven.

Christian virtue is the only object worthy of ambition. God alone can satisfy our heart, and that heart must be centred in Him alone.

CROISSET, S.J.



## 70.—On Anger.

SS. BASIL, CHRYSOSTOM,  
and AMBROSE.

“Whosoever is angry with his brother, shall deserve to be condemned by the judgment.”—MATTHEW v. 13.

[ST. BASIL—called the Great, to distinguish him from other Patriarchs of the same name—was born in 329, and in the year 370 he was made Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, where he died in 379.

Among all the Grecian Patriarchs St. Basil ranks as the most distinguished ecclesiastic.

The vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty framed by St. Basil are to this day the rules of every order of Christendom. His writings were read by all, even by the Pagans. They compared him to the celebrated ancient orators, and was unsurpassed by any of the holy Fathers. An excellent life of St. Basil, by Mons. Hermant, was published in France in the year 1674.]

THOSE persons who are subject to this furious passion, are compared in Holy Writ to beasts, because they imitate their malignity; and that those who are in the habit of committing all kinds of crime, are rightly placed in the category of those ferocious and carnivorous animals, who bear a natural enmity to man.

Quickness of temper, ill-natured, inconsiderate words, violence, calumnies, reproaches, injuries, blows, and all other disorders, are the result and fruit of anger. It is that vice which sharpens the swords, with which men kill each other, that brothers no longer recognise their own flesh and blood, that parents and children stifle the best feelings that nature implants in them.

A passionate man does not even know himself, he respects neither age, virtue, nor kindred, he forgets benefits, and is not moved by aught that is most sacred amongst men.

Anger is a momentary madness. Those who are prone to it, neglect themselves for the sake of revenge, and often thereby expose themselves to all sorts of danger.

The remembrance of wrongs that may have been inflicted on them, is like a needle which continually pricks them; their excited minds know no rest, until they have caused some great grief, or until they have inflicted some injury on those who may have offended them; when, what they wish to do, often recoils upon themselves, and this is frequently the case.

ST. BASIL.

. . . . .

Do you not know that when one flies into a passion, trifling things appear insupportable, and what is the least injurious becomes magnified, and appears to be an insulting outrage. That which we look upon as a *little word* has often caused murders and ruined entire cities.

Thus, when we love some one, the most disagreeable task appears to be light and easy; in like manner, when we cherish hate, the lightest things appear to be insupportable. Although the word or words may have been uttered without intention of hurting the feelings, we harbour the thought that it must proceed from a heart that is poisoned against us. St. Paul says, "Let not the sun go down on your anger." He fears that the night, finding the offended person alone, may fester the wound. During the day the work and bustle of the world causes his anger to slumber, but when the night has come, he is alone, and he broods over his fancied injuries, and his troubled soul becomes excited, and passionate anger resumes its sway.

St. Paul, foreseeing this evil, wishes him to be reconciled before the sun goes down, in order that the devil may not have the opportunity of re-enkindling his anger, and thus make it turn to hate.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

. . . . .

If a man cannot help feeling angry, in spite of himself, he can at least try to mitigate his wrath.

Against that unhappy feeling of anger, we should oppose it, by that gentlest of all virtues, patience. For if anger should exceed its proper limit, it opens a wound in the soul which allows itself to be led away, it deadens every proper feeling, thickens the tongue, disturbs the eye, and, in fact, revolutionises the whole frame.

Therefore, in dealing with an angry man, resist him if you can, and if you cannot, yield to him.

Would you wish to know how to act, when you have received an insult? Do not return evil for evil; pay no attention to malicious reports, neither be wicked because others are wicked. The pagans have often quoted a remark made by one of their philosophers, and which is certainly deserving of praise. His servant having greatly displeased him by an act of gross injustice, he said to him: "Go, wretched man, how severely would I not punish you, were I not in a passion!"

David acted in a similar way; he restrained his anger when he felt tempted to revenge; but he so thoroughly had mastered his passions, that he did not answer a single word to the insults they heaped upon him.

ST. AMBROSE.  
*Officiis.*

## 71.—On Avarice.

"Let your life be exempt from avarice ; be content with what you have."

—HEBREWS xiii. 5.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM and MASSILLON.

THERE is nothing more cruel, nothing more infamous than the usury, so common amongst men.

The usurer traffics on the misfortunes of others ; he enriches himself on their poverty, and then he demands his compound interest, as if they were under a great obligation to him.

He is heartless to his creditor, but is afraid of appearing so ; when he pretends that he has every inclination to oblige, he crushes him the more and reduces him to the last extremity. He offers one hand, and with the other pushes him down the precipice.

He offers to assist the shipwrecked, and instead of guiding them safely into port, he steers them among the reefs and rocks. Where your treasure is, there is your heart, says our Saviour. Perhaps you may have avoided many evils arising from avarice ; but still if you cherish an attachment to this odious vice, it will be of little use, for you will still be a slave, free as you fancy yourself to be ; and you will fall from the height of heaven, to that spot wherein your gold is hidden, and your thoughts will still complacently dwell on money, gains, usury, and dishonest commerce.

What is more miserable than such a state ?

There is not a sadder tyranny than that of a man who

is a willing subject to this furious tyrant, destroying all that is good in him, namely, the nobility of his soul.

So long as you have a heart basely attached to gains and riches ; whatsoever truths may be told you, or whatsoever advice may be given to you, to secure your salvation—all will be useless.

Avarice is an incurable malady, an ever-burning fire, a tyranny which extends far and wide ; for he who, in this life is the slave of money, is loaded with heavy chains, and destined to carry far heavier chains in the life to come.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.  
*De Avaritia.*

It is that insatiable greed for gold and the goods of this world, which engenders all those crying injustices,—all those double-dealings in trade and companies, those infidelities to promises, that all-devouring rapacity, which, heedless of the widow and orphans, violate the most sacred laws, merely to satisfy the cravings of a vast cupidity.

From avarice arises, that desire of establishing the status of your own family, and of building up a name and reputation, at the expense of the holy commandments of God and His Church.

From that proceed, those forced sacrifices of unloved children to occupations for which they may have a distaste, merely for the sake of aggrandising those, for whom they have a greater love,—that bold usurpation of the poor, by depriving them, so to speak, of the inheritance of Jesus Christ.

It is a sin of which a man can very seldom be cured without the help of an especial grace.

When a vice is not sufficiently strong of itself to be satisfied, it generally calls in the assistance of another vice near at hand ; for instance, vengeance is satiated, when

blood is spilled. Misfortune cures us of pride and ambition; sensuality dies out with our strength and health; but avarice alone increases with our age.

Ambition feeds avarice, pleasure flatters it, and the old man used up by sensuality becomes eager for money, and so hoards something daily for the end of a journey, which, alas for him! is so near at hand.

One look alone of our Saviour touched the heart of Peter; a word converted Paul; the incredulous Thomas becomes a firm believer as soon as he touched the wounds and side of his Lord and Master; but neither look nor word nor touch, did the avaricious Judas heed.

Ah! my brother, if a little limpid stream were near, and that was sufficient to satisfy your thirst, why seek for one as wide as an ocean, which will only make you more thirsty? If you have sufficient for your wants, why seek for more?

A man who is in heart a miser has plenty, and yet has it not. He has enough, because he is already rich and amasses daily. He has it not, for with all his gold he yearns for more; he lives as if he had nothing, and at last he dies poor. His gold is as nothing, and he dies poorer than the poorest beggar.

Jesus Christ came down from heaven to cure this dreadful vice. To drive away avarice, He elevates the love of poverty to the highest rank, and to effect this, He who is the Lord and Master of all riches on earth, preferred to be born in a stable; to pass His early days in a carpenter's workshop, and then die naked on a cross, in order to establish a religion, poor and pure, in the midst of a coarse and cruel Judaism.

MASSILLON.

## 72.—On Atheism and Unbelief.

ST. AUGUSTINE and ST. CYPRIAN.

“ I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.”

—ISAIAH xlv. 6.

IF I asked an atheist how I can be convinced that he is alive (for, indeed, I cannot see the soul that dwells within him), he would answer that he acts, he speaks, and walks, consequently that he is a living being. But it is possible to move, walk, and even speak by mechanism, and I see nothing which persuades me that he has within himself a principle which of its nature can control or instil such an animation. At least I may obstinately require proofs from him, of that interior source which belies him.

The intelligence, reflection and freedom which accompany these exterior signs of life, he replies, leave no doubt that the source from which they spring, must be the soul.

I agree, and am forced to agree, with him. In admitting creation, why, then, does he not adore the Creator?

Creatures are ever in motion; of themselves, they could not possibly know how to maintain, and keep up all that so harmoniously dwells within. He will not say what he thinks. To choose with so much certainty all that is proper and convenient, to make use of things to which they are indifferent, and which, in their hardness of heart, they attribute to chance.

O fool! let him acknowledge that Supreme Being, whose wisdom and power shine so visibly in the world.

Holy Scripture makes no distinction between the atheist, and the madman and fool; they are nevertheless led by a very different way. The fool thinks what he says, and says what he thinks; the thoughts and words of the atheist do not agree. His opinions give the lie to his words, and his words give the lie to his opinions. In his heart he denies the Divinity. I am wrong, I should say he would wish to deny it; he, however, cannot succeed in this; for he dares not publish his opinion, because he does not understand it. Every effort that he takes in order to fly from the fear of God (who is a witness of all his deeds) only ends in a vague, confused idea of a belief which startles him in spite of himself. O madman! to wish to force his reason, to lose his reasoning faculties.

It must be madness to battle against a truth, which has been accepted at all times and in all places. There is a Divinity, and this is what all have agreed upon; a God has been acknowledged, and Him they have adored.

This conviction is not the result of education, for education differs in all parts of the globe. It is not the commerce, which has spread from one nation to another; for all nations have not been able to agree on this point, without the help of a mutual intelligence. Questions of policy have not been able to produce it, for governments so opposed to each other, so different in manners and customs, could not possibly come to terms. Princes and subjects could not have been able to combat with the impressions, naturally formed in all kinds of intelligences.

Is it study which has given it birth? Certainly not! On this point, the grossest ignorance does not yield to good breeding or knowledge. In favour of a Divinity, I do not ask, said Tertullian, for the testimony of a soul in established schools, in well-stored libraries, or in first-rate colleges; I appeal to a simple and savage soul; I invoke the soul itself, such as it comes from the hands of its



Creator. If any person has been the first to discover or make known the existence of that Supreme Being, tell me the land from which he has sprung, and the nation which has published it to the whole world. Point out the time, and the age which has first heard it. The birth of a truth so startling, so important, could not have failed to have been noticed.

Perhaps it may be said, in opposition to this, that idolatry has reigned, that empires and kingdoms have adored different gods; I know it, and I only maintain to establish a universal knowledge and recognition of the Divinity.

If there be under heaven an atheist, he must acknowledge that idolatry destroys itself, and that his ridicule is only equal to his error. But reason, alone, cannot compass all the perfections of the Divinity, of which it is struck with wonder, and which it cannot ignore.

All men yearn after a happiness which they naturally aim at acquiring; but without the assistance of faith, how could they agree, as to its quality and essence? To an ordinary intelligent mind, how difficult it would prove to act in opposition to an opinion which is universally recognised! And yet that very difficulty, would it not be a convincing proof of the truth he would deny?

One could scarcely imagine a man to be more wicked than he who coolly and deliberately resolves to riot in the commission of the most abominable vices. And yet a man who makes it his study and profession, and who piques himself upon it to deny the existence of a Supreme Being, is such a man. It is neither chance, nor delusion, nor reflection, nor knowledge, nor even debauchery, that have led him into that frightful error; it is his will only.

We are born ignorant, weak, inconstant, inclined to evil; but we come into this world, with all the prejudices that wage war against atheism.

If it is possible to be an atheist, it is because the will to

be one is there. It is undoubtedly true that such a wish arises from debauchery, but such will is, in itself a lewdness of the most detestable kind. One does not plunge oneself by degrees in the lowest depths of vice; as soon as they affirm that there is no God, they cast themselves suddenly into the abyss.

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*On Psalm lxxiii.*

. . . . .

God cannot be seen, He is far too bright for us; neither can we understand Him, He is far beyond our comprehension; He is not sufficiently valued, because He is out of the reach of our senses; this is why, we should worthily estimate the perfection of His being, when we say that He is inestimable.

If I know not myself, if I know neither the nature nor the essence of my soul, if I cannot give a reason of what is in me, how shall I dare to lift up my eyes in order to understand God, who is the beginning and end of all things, and who is Himself, without beginning and end?

ST. CYPRIAN.  
*De Idol. Vanit.*

### 73.—On Blasphemy.

Extract from "*La Morale Chrétienne*," and  
ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

"A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house."—ECCLES. xxiii. 12.

ALL oaths are forbidden, except when absolutely necessary ; and it is breaking the commandment which God has made, not only by taking His sacred name in vain, but He is dishonoured by blasphemies, impious jests, oaths uttered on trifling occasions, frequent and habitual swearing, uttered through wicked malice or through useless, frivolous promises, confirmed on oath.

We acknowledge the holiness of the name of God by faith, and it is by faith, we know that perjury dishonours Him. With regard to this precept, every oath, every curse, every kind of swearing is against this precept, and opposed to the respect due to the holy name of God ; for "holy and terrible is His name :"*Sanctum et terribile nomen ejus*. But where are the men and traders of the world who obey this commandment ? Alas ! many swear of their own accord, without a thought, without reflection, and very many through habit.

Let us take care to avoid the use of oaths in our temporal affairs ; for it is an abuse of religion, and is taking a mercenary view of God.

The abuse of swearing arises either from a bold defiance of Him, who forbids it, or from the malice of those, who make use of it, or from thoughtlessness and irreverence.

Religion, honesty, and honour, would remedy all this.

Nothing would be so contrary to the Spirit of God and to the doctrine of Jesus Christ as the making use of oaths in the church, because it would be the occasion of perjury, lay snares for the weak and ignorant, and sometimes would place the name and truths of God in the hands of the wicked.

*1 a Morale Chrétienne.*

I beseech you, my brothers, to be ever on your guard against the habit of swearing and blaspheming.

If a slave dare to pronounce the name of his master, he does it but seldom, and then only with respect; therefore is it not a shocking impiety to speak with contempt and irreverence of the name of the Master of angels and seraphim? People handle the book of the Gospel with a religious fear, and then only with clean hands, and yet your rash tongue would inconsiderately profane the name of the Divine Author of the Gospel.

Would you wish to know with what respect, fear, and wonder, the choirs of the angels pronounce the adorable name? Listen to the prophet Isaias: "I saw," says Isaias, "the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated: upon it, stood the seraphim, who cried one to another and said, Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of his glory."

See with what terror they are seized, even while they praise and glorify Him. As for you, my brethren, you know how cold and indifferent are the prayers you say, and you know how frequently you blaspheme a name so majestic, so sacred, and how you try to make excuses for the bad habit you have contracted. It is easy, yes, I say, it is easy, with a little care, attention, and reflection, to leave off this vicious habit.

Since we have fallen, my brethren, into this sin of blas-

phemy, I conjure you, in the name of our Lord, to rebuke openly these blasphemers. When you meet with such who publicly sin in this respect, correct them by word of mouth, and, if necessary, by your strong arm. Let these shameless swearers be covered with confusion. You could not employ your hand to a holier work. And if you are given into custody, go boldly before the magistrate, and say in your defence that you have avenged a blasphemy.

For if a person is punished for speaking contemptuously of a prince, is it not reasonable to suppose that a person who speaks irreverently of God, should be sentenced to a severer punishment? It is a public crime, a common injury which all the world ought to condemn.

Let the Jews and infidels see that our magistrates are Christians, and that they will not allow those to go unpunished, who insult and outrage their Master.

Do you remember that it was a false oath that overturned the house, temples, and walls of Jerusalem, and from a superb city, it became a mass of ruins? Neither the sacred vessels, nor the sanctuary could stay the vengeance of a God, justly angered against a violator of His word.

Sedecias did not receive a more favoured treatment than Jerusalem. Flight did not save him from his enemies. This prince, escaping secretly, was pursued and taken by the Assyrians, who led him to their king. The king, after asking him the reason of his perfidy, not only caused his children to be killed, but deprived him of his sight, and sent him back to Babylon, loaded with iron chains.

Would you know the reason why? It was that the barbarians and Jews who inhabited the country adjoining Persia should know, by this terrible example, that the breach of an oath is punishable.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.  
*Seventh Homily.*

## 74.—On Calumny and Slander.

BOURDALOUE, and SS. CHRYSOSTOM  
and BERNARD.

“The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; it is an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison.”—JAMES iii. 6, 8.

SCRIPTURE, in giving us a portrait of a slanderer, represents him as a terrible and formidable man. “A man full of tongue is terrible in his city, and he that is rash in his word shall be hateful” (*Eccles.* ix. 25).

In fact, he is formidable in a city, formidable in a community, formidable in private houses, formidable among the rich, as also among the poor. In a city, because he creates factions and parties; in a community, because he disturbs its interior peace and union; in private dwellings, because he introduces coolness and enmities; among the rich, because he abuses the confidence they place in him, in order to work the destruction of those whom they may dislike; among the poor, because he urges them on to quarrel one with another. How many families have been estranged through a petty slander! how many friendships have been severed by a scandalous joke! how many hearts lacerated by indiscreet reports!

What is that, that daily occasions so many open and declared ruptures? Is it not an offensive expression which was totally uncalled for?

What is that, that causes duels (now so wisely forbidden by laws human and divine)? Is it not often only a stinging remark, which is not credited, but which, according to the false honour of the world, could not go unpunished?

Although other vices generally increase in virulence with time, still there are certain states and conditions of life which retard or stop their growth; it may be by the grace

of vocation, or by a firm resolution to conquer bad habits, or by a withdrawal from occasions of sin, or it may be by a kind of necessity.

Avarice, for instance, is less liable to be rooted in the heart of a religious; ambition is rarely to be found among the poor and lowly. There have been maidens in the Christian world who have immediately overcome all temptations of the flesh, but as for slander, it exercises its sway over every class.

It is the vice of the adult, of the young, of sovereigns, of the learned and ignorant; it is the vice of the court, city, of the lawyer, of the soldier, of the young and old. Shall I say it? and yet I cannot draw the line here. No, my brethren, I must say it with all respect; it is the vice of priests as well as of laymen, of the religious bodies as well as the seculars, of the devotee as well, perhaps more so, than that of the wicked. Recollect, however, I do not say it is the vice of the truly devout, thank God! True piety is exempt from every vice, and to attribute a single fault to such a one would be an insult to God, and throw discredit on the worship due to Him. But those who profess devotion have their besetting sins like unto all, and you know if slander and calumny are not amongst the most usual.

Besides that, it is a sin which tempts the most devout a sin which nullifies the gifts of grace, a sin which corrupts their minds, whilst their bodies remain chaste, a sin which sadly shipwrecks their souls, even after having avoided the most criminal perils, and the fiercest passions; in fine, it is a sin which is the cause of the loss of many a pious soul, and which dishonours devotion.

BOURDALOUE  
*Dominical.*

. . . . .

St. Bernard, in his twenty-fourth sermon on the Canticles, depicts the portrait of a sanctimonious slanderer.

The saint says:—Look at that clever calumniator! He begins by fetching a deep sigh, he affects to be humble, and puts on a modest look, and with a voice choking with sobs, tries to gloss over the slander, which is on the tip of his tongue. One would fancy, that he expressly assumed a calm and easy demeanour; for when he speaks against his brother, it is in a tender and compassionate tone. I am really hurt, says he, to find that our brother has fallen into such a sin; you all know how much I love him, and how often I have tried to correct him. It is not to-day that I have noticed his failing; for I should always be on my guard to speak of others, but others have spoken of it too. It would be in vain to disguise the fact; it is only too true, and with tears in my eyes I tell it to you. This poor unfortunate brother has talent, but it must be confessed that he is very guilty, and however great may be our friendship for him, it is impossible to excuse him.

ST. BERNARD.

To commit a murder, besides the not having the person in your power, there are many measures and precautions to take. A favourable opportunity must be waited for, and a place must be selected before we can put so damnable a design into execution. More than this, the pistols may miss fire, blows may not be sufficient, and all wounds are not mortal. But to deprive a man of his reputation and honour, one word is sufficient. By finding out the most sensitive part of his honour, you may tarnish his reputation, by telling it to all who know him, and easily take away his character for honour and integrity. To do this, however, no time is required, for scarcely have you complacently cherished the wish to calumniate him, than the sin is effected.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.



## 75.—On Discord, Law Suits, etc.

PÈRE LEJEUNE, HOMÉLIES MORALES,  
and ST. AMBROSE.

“He that studieth discords, loveth quarrels.”—PROVERBS xvii. 19.

[PÈRE JOHN LEJEUNE, called the famous preacher, was born at Dôle, in the year 1592, where his father was the parliamentary councillor. He refused a canonry of Arbois, in order to enter the growing Congregation of the Oratory. Cardinal de Berulle, the founder of the French Oratory, had a great affection for Père Lejeune, and always looked upon him, as one of his ablest followers.

The French Oratory must not be confounded with the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, the rules and constitutions of each, being different from each other. (See page 64.)

Père Lejeune, when preaching a course of Lenten sermons at Rouen, entirely lost his eyesight; this occurred when he was but thirty-three years old; he however continued his preaching at various missions, until he reached the age of sixty. La Fayette, the Bishop of Limoges, induced him at last to remain in his diocese, and it was at Limoges he died, in the odour of sanctity, on the 19th of August 1672, aged eighty.

His sermons, occupying the space of ten volumes octavo, were published in Toulouse and in Paris. The celebrated Massillon acknowledged, that he was indebted to Père Lejeune for many beautiful passages he introduced into his own sermons; and it was through the reading of his sermons, that induced the recently canonised Benedict Labré to devote his whole life to silent prayer and meditation.

A selection from his sermons was afterwards published, and it was called “The Sermons of the Blind Father.”]

QUARRELS, enmities, and law proceedings do not very often cease among people who are at variance with others: these kinds of disputes are for the most part hereditary

in some families; they continue and pass from generation to generation. They communicate their differences and aversion to their children; they speak of them in their presence; they tell them of the injuries they pretend to have received from those with whom they have been at variance.

Such a one, they say, is a declared enemy of our house; his sole object is to injure us; we have always had some disagreements together; it is a long time since we went to law, and our suit is not as yet ended. Young children, susceptible as they ever are, listen attentively, soon share in their parents' dislikes; they enter into the passionate feelings of their fathers; they suck in with their milk, so to speak, their corrupt inclinations, and scarcely have they arrived to man's estate, than they have imbibed, through those bad discourses, dispositions which will lead them to perdition.

It is thus that enmities multiply, and become lasting; they descend from father to son, from generation to generation, and a wretched, miserable misunderstanding, which, though small at its birth, grows and grows, and descends by degrees to the end of ages. Time even does not finish it, but it continues still in an unhappy eternity.

LE PÈRE LEJEUNE.  
*Sermons, Vol. v.*

. . . . .

As the Son of God censures and condemns the dissensions and animosities which are permanent among men, so is it His intention to recommend peace and concord. This is what the Holy Ghost teaches us through the mouth of the Royal Prophet: *Inquire pacem et persequere eam*—Seek peace, and do not weary in its pursuit. The Apostle in like manner in his Epistle to the Romans: "If it be possible, my brethren, as much as is in you, having peace with all men."

St. Chrysostom weighs those words, "If it be possible," for, says he, it sometimes happens, that it is not possible to be at peace with certain persons, and on certain occasions,—for instance, when there is a question of upholding Christian piety and truth, which is sought to be vilified. The Apostle says: "Do your duty in the sight of all men, not revenging yourselves, so that you may give no countenance to discord or iniquity;" but if piety and devotion be attacked, if any one should infringe the rules, leave peace to defend the truth and keep it unto death, so that you may ever maintain charity inviolate towards those with whom you may have been at variance. You will not treat him as an enemy, but you must speak to him in a friendly way, tell him of his fault in a mild and charitable manner, and explain the truth as it is; for this must be the meaning of those words—"As much as in you, having peace with all men."

Show him that you are a sincere friend, taking care, however, that you do not disguise the truth.

The glorious St. Gregory de Nazianzen seeing that the assembled bishops of the city of Constantinople were vexed and troubled at his being elected Bishop, which dignity, the saint had only accepted through compulsion, he not only, for peace' sake, willingly sent in his resignation, but he beseeched and entreated the Emperor Theodosius to allow him to refuse the offered charge. "I ask of you," said he, "to grant me one favour: this is to lighten and relieve me from the weight of the work with which I am loaded. You have triumphed over savage enemies, but your glory and the grand trophy of your empire, is to establish peace and concord among the bishops. In their councils they are disunited; the only means of reuniting them is a resignation. The Church's ship is disturbed, rocking fearfully; since it is on my account, that this storm has arisen, throw me overboard, and there soon will be a calm."

The Emperor and his councillors, knowing the eminent virtue and the profound learning of this holy prelate, were so surprised at this request so touchingly delivered, that it was with extreme reluctance, that they agreed to accept his resignation.

HOMÉLIES MORALES.

. . . . .

In order to avoid dissensions, we should be ever on our guard, more especially with those who drive us to argue with them, with those who vex and irritate us, and who say things likely to excite us to anger. When we find ourselves in company with quarrelsome, eccentric individuals, people who openly and unblushingly say the most shocking things, difficult to put up with, we should take refuge in silence, and the wisest plan is, not to reply to people whose behaviour is so preposterous.

Those who insult us and treat us contumeliously are anxious for a spiteful sarcastic reply: the silence we then affect, disheartens them, and they cannot avoid showing their vexation; they do all they can to provoke us and to elicit a reply, but the best way to baffle them is to say nothing, refuse to argue with them and to leave them to chew the cud of their hasty anger. This method of bringing down their pride disarms them, and shows them plainly that we slight and despise them.

ST. AMBROSE.  
*Offices, Chap. v.*

## 76.—On Effeminacy and Sensuality.

LE PÈRE HAINEUVE.

“Many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping), that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame.”—PHILIPPIANS iii. 18.

*Extracts from an excellent book entitled “The Broad Way that Leads to Perdition,” by PÈRE HAINEUVE.*

IT is a very dangerous error to fall into, to imagine, that in leading an effeminate and indolent life, one does not stray into the broad road which leads to perdition.

This is as much as to say, that you cannot be positively wicked, if you do not give way to excess, and that it is not going to perdition, if you go on slowly, or step by step.

If you examine your conscience, you would soon see, that in leading such a life you are not walking on that narrow path, on which our Saviour bids you enter.

As you would not like to confess, that you are in the broad path, you must as readily acknowledge that you are not of the number of those who daily take up their cross and practise austerities which accompany those who walk in the narrow path.

From this it follows, that we imagine that there must be a third road of which Jesus Christ does not make mention, and that it is in this said third path, that we can securely walk, without giving ourselves too much trouble, to reach the gates of heaven.

Perhaps you may have never thought of this third road, which we have just mentioned, but it is the fact that you

naturally love an easy and indolent life; you wish to enjoy all its attractions, to have all your own way, without being troubled with sufferings, or with contradictions, and in that state of mind, were you compelled to make choice of the two paths, you would say, that you would choose neither the one nor the other.

You have no desire to go by the narrow path, because you have a horror of trouble and constraint, and you do not wish to go by the broad path, for you dread the loss of your soul.

What would you then? Which road do you intend to take? How do you purpose living?

If you dare to be candid, you would make this sincere avowal, that you seek for liberty to enjoy the pleasures of this life, without the fear of losing your soul for all eternity, and you seek for a path, which would conduct you to eternal bliss, without suffering all the pains and labours which we have to endure, before we reach the end of our journey.

This then is what you seek for, and what you lay claim to. But where is this path? where shall we find it on this side of the grave?

Two paths are spoken of in holy writ; one on which we find thorns and crosses—these we flee from; the other leads to perdition, which we fain would avoid.

Our Lord said (*Matt. vii.*), "Strait is the way that leadeth to life." The Son of God does not say, "the way that leadeth to perfection," but "the way that leadeth to life, is strait."

He does not say that there is a strait way which leads to life, as if there was another; but He says positively, "The way that leads to life eternal is strait;" to teach us that whosoever wishes to enter heaven, must resolve to enter in at the narrow gate.

In many other chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke

He repeats the same thing : *Arcta est via. . . . Angusta via est contendite intrare per angustam portam.*"

Has He told us, even once, that there was a sweet and easy way to work out our salvation? If there was one, would He have been ignorant of it? If He had known it, would He have concealed it? Had He not known of it, how could He be called the true way, and the most excellent of all guides, *Ego sum via, veritas et vita*, "I am the way, the truth and the life"?

If after He had discovered it, He had concealed it from us, would we not have had a right to complain of His silence on so important a subject? would we not have had reason to reproach Him, for having loaded us with a useless burden by conducting us along a rude and rugged path, strewn with flinty stones, bristling with thorns, to a terminus, when He might have led us through a smooth and even pathway all covered with flowers?

Remark then, how emphatically He speaks of the difficulties of the road, "How strait and narrow is the way!" Ah! once more, how narrow is the way that leadeth to eternal life!

If the effeminate and sensual life, which so many Christians lead, could pass through the narrow way, what need would there be for our Saviour to say so emphatically, *Quam arcta et angusta via est* (How strait and narrow is the way)?

But note especially, that our Saviour speaks but of two ways—one narrow, the other broad. We cannot trace a vestige of the third; and as all the wicked march on the broad way, it evidently follows that all the elect, without exception, must go by the narrow way.

After that, what delusion, what blindness to imagine for a moment that we can work out our salvation by leading an effeminate, an indolent life!

## 77.—On Envy and Jealousy.

SS. CYPRIAN, CHRYSOSTOM,  
and BASIL.

"By the envy of the devil death came into the world, and they follow him that are of his side."—WISDOM ii. 24, 25.

[ST. CYPRIAN was born in the year 200 at Carthage. In his forty-sixth year he was converted to Christianity, and in 248 he was made Bishop of Carthage. On the 14th of September 258 he was beheaded at Carthage, because, in opposition to the orders of the Government, he had preached the gospel, in his own gardens.

Lactantius calls him one of the most eloquent of the early Fathers of the Church. St. Jerome compares his style to a spring of the purest water, whose course is mild and peaceable. Others have compared it, perhaps with more reason, to a torrent, which draws down with it, all that impedes its progress.

All his writings have been translated into French by Lombert, and published in the year 1672 in four volumes.]

OH! ye who are envious, let me tell you, that however often you may seek for the opportunity of injuring him, whom you hate, you will never be able to do him so much harm, as you do harm to yourselves.

He, whom you would pursue through the malice of your envy, may probably escape, but you will never be able to fly from yourselves. Wherever you may be, your adversary is with you, your sin rankles within.

It must be a self-willed evil, to persecute a person whom God has taken under the protection of His grace; it becomes an irremediable sin, to hate a man whom God wishes to make happy.



Envy is as prolific as it is hurtful; it is the root of all evil, the source of endless disorder and misery, the cause of most sins that are committed. Envy gives birth to hatred and animosity. From it, avarice is begotten, for it sees with an evil eye honours and emoluments heaped upon a stranger, and thinks that such honours should have been, by right, bestowed upon himself. From envy, comes contempt of God, and of the salutary precepts of our Saviour.

The envious man is cruel, proud, unfaithful, impatient, and quarrelsome; and, what is strange, when this vice gains the mastery, he is no longer master of himself, and he is unable to correct his many faults. If the bond of peace is broken, if the rights of fraternal charity are violated, if truth is altered or disguised, it is often envy, that hurries him on to crime.

What happiness can such a man enjoy in this world? To be envious or jealous of another, because such a one is virtuous and happy, is to hate in him, the graces and blessings God has showered down upon him.

Does he not punish himself when he sees the success and welfare of others? Does he not draw down upon himself tortures, from which there is no respite? Are not his thoughts, his mind, constantly on the rack?

He pitilessly punishes himself, and, in his heart, performs the same cruel office which Divine Justice reserves, for the chastisement of the greatest criminal.

ST. CYPRIAN.

*De Zelo.*

. . . . .

Oh! envious man, you injure yourself, more than he, whom you would injure, and the sword with which you wound, will recoil and wound yourself.

What harm did Cain do to Abel? Contrary to his intention, he did him the greatest good, for he caused

him to pass to a better and a blessed life, and he himself was plunged into an abyss of woe. In what did Esau injure Jacob? Did not his envy prevent him from being enriched in the place, in which he lived; and, losing the inheritance and the blessing of his father, did he not die a miserable death? What harm did the brothers of Joseph do to Joseph, whose envy went so far as to wish to shed his blood? Were they not driven to the last extremity, and well nigh perishing with hunger, whilst their brother reigned all through Egypt?

It is ever thus; the more you envy your brother, the greater good you confer upon him. God, who sees all, takes the cause of the innocent in hand, and, irritated by the injury you inflict, deigns to raise up him, whom you wish to lower, and will punish you to the full extent of your crime.

If God usually punishes those, who rejoice at the misfortunes of their enemies, how much more will He punish those who, excited by envy, seek to do an injury to those who have never injured them?

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.  
*Sermon 40.*

Envy is a gnawing pain which springs from the success and prosperity of another; and this is the reason why the envious are never exempt, from trouble and vexation. If an abundant harvest fills the granaries of a neighbour, if success crowns his efforts, the envious man is chagrined and sad. If one man can boast of prudence, talent, and eloquence; if another is rich, and is very liberal to the poor, if good works are praised by all around, the envious man is shocked and grieved.

The envious, however, dare not speak; although envy makes them counterfeit gladness, their hearts are sore within. If you ask him what vexes him, he dare not tell

the reason. It is not really the happiness of his friend that annoys him, neither is it his gaiety that makes him sad, nor is he sorry to see his friend prosper; but it is, that he is persuaded that the prosperity of others, is the cause of his misery.

This is what the envious would be forced to acknowledge, if they spoke the truth sincerely; but because they dare not confess so shameful a sin, they, in secret, feed a sore which tortures them and eats away their rest.

As the shadow ever accompanies the pedestrian when walking in the sun, so envy throws its shadow on those who are successful in the world.

ST. BASIL.  
*De Invidia.*

## 78.—On Flattery.

By the Author of "*Guerre aux Vices*,"  
SS. BASIL and JEROME.

"It is better to be rebuked by a wise man, than to be deceived with flattery of fools."—ECCLESIASTES vii. 6.

SINS which flatter us are always the most dangerous, because they please our self-love, and they favour the inclination and humour of sinners. It is on this account that there are few who distrust it, and fewer still who guard against it. It is somewhat difficult to look upon a vice, as an enemy, that so well knows how to flatter the disorderly passions and the corrupt inclinations of our nature.

St. Jerome says that flattery is always cunning and insidious; and indeed flattery is the most accommodating of vices. It is flattery that agreeably harmonises with the feelings and inclinations of men, whether they are good or bad, just or unjust, solely to humour them, while the poison works within. It does the contrary of what the Apostle did; it is all to all, corrupting and seducing those who put their trust in it; and not only does it enter into the inclination of sinners, but it advises them ever to follow the disorderly motions of their pernicious passions and interests, for their own gratification. It praises with affected applause, the vicious and criminal actions of the rich and powerful.

But the malice of such pernicious complacences go still further, when it prefers to attack the good and just and

censure their virtues, notwithstanding the curse which this draws down. "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, both are abominable before God," says the Book of Proverbs (*chap. xvii.*)

If you wish to know the evil effects of flattery, details could easily be given ; but it may be said, in general terms, that through this detestable flattery, truth is betrayed, minds are seduced, the most upright hearts and intentions are corrupted ; it inspires a contempt for virtue, and a relish for vice ; it prevents sinners from being converted, and confirms them in habitual sin ; and, to complete their ultimate loss, it induces them to take a delight in bad actions, which they hear so praised, *Delectat ea facere, quæ videmus laudare*, says St. Augustine.

Of all interested men, he who is the most selfish, is the flatterer, because, although his praises cost nothing, still he does not give his applauses for nothing. It is of little consequence what profit he gains, so he can extract usurious interest therefrom. For if he approves of the vices of others, it is that they should not condemn his own. It is indifferent to him, if he flatters that which is good, or that which is bad, so that he sees a prospect of gaining something by it. If he employs his artifices to please the rich and noble, he does it with the hope of securing their favours or of obtaining their patronage. If he bestows his praises on all sorts of people, he does it with the idea of receiving something in return, or to obtain something he has in view. And thus it is that flatterers corrupt and seduce us.

To shield ourselves from one vice, we must take care not to fall into another, and for fear of being taken for a selfish flatterer, we must not in any way be cynical or churlish. Those saints who have respectfully praised one another were not flatterers. They have taught us that we should esteem, praise, and love virtue, and virtuous persons :

*Bonæ vitæ et virtutis et solet et debet esse laudatio*, says St. Augustine.

The majority of good Catholics, being humble and timid, require to be encouraged, to continue to be good, by a just meed of praise which their virtue deserves, and we should be convinced that there is no less injustice in refusing praises to those who deserve them, than to flatter those whose wicked conduct has rendered them unworthy.

This right medium consists chiefly in three things. The first is, never to praise wicked and vicious persons, nor to approve of their bad conduct, but rather to keep silent. If pressed to give your opinion, declare frankly and without exaggeration, in what such and such a deed, may be approved of. Secondly, never to praise any one, except for things that really deserve praise, and do this with all sincerity. The third is, to be sparing of praise of good people, in their presence, but to honour and praise them highly when absent, when an opportunity occurs, when we can do so without affectation.

Thus we should destroy flattery, and untruth, and we should, at the same time, perform acts of justice and charity.

*Guerre aux Vices.*

. . . . .

St. Basil remarks that vices and virtues are so alike in colour, that it is not always easy to discern the difference. Prodigality, for example, has somewhat an air of magnificence; rashness imitates, by its fits and starts, the generous impulses of valour; hypocrisy has some outward resemblance to the exterior signs of devotion. This it is that gives rise to the abuse of this resemblance, and that, by two classes of persons, namely, the envious and the flatterers. The flatterer takes vices for virtues, and the envious, on the contrary, takes virtues for vices. The

flatterer, to shield the vices of the great, gives them the colour of virtues, and the envious, to obscure the lustre of virtues, gives them the colour of vices. If you are prodigal, the flatterer will say that you are magnificent; if you are liberal, the envious will say that you are a prodigal. If you are rash, the flatterer will say that you are generous and brave; if you are really courageous, the envious will say that you are rash.

What does the flatterer mean by such false praises, but to aggrandise himself and build up his fortune? What do the envious mean, but to destroy that of others?

ST. BASIL

. . . . .

Nothing so corrupts the heart and mind as flattery, for the flatterer's tongue does more harm than the persecutor's sword. We are dragged downwards by an evil which is inherent within us, we feel favourably towards those who flatter us, and although in our reply we show, or pretend to show, that we are unworthy of their praise, we nevertheless receive the flattering praise with a secret joy and pleasure.

ST. JEROME.  
*Epistle 121.*

## 79.—On Gambling.

PÈRES GIROUST and BOURDALOUE.

"The people sat down to eat and drink, and then rose up to play."

—Exodus xxxii. 6.

[JAQUES GIROUST, the Jesuit Father, was born at Beaufort, near Anjou, in 1624, and died in Paris in 1689, aged sixty-five. His manner of preaching, was simple, and void of display, but this very simplicity, was accompanied with such earnest fervour, and unction, that it won the hearts of all his audience, and was, through the help of God, the means of many being converted to a new life.]

IT is undoubtedly true, that all immoderate amusements are sins; and I am of opinion, that there is not one, from whatever way we look at it, where you may not find many irregularities arising therefrom. Why? Well, we shall see. Pleasures and amusements, are determined by the result.

In reference to work, when it is finished, they may be looked upon as relaxations, with regard to any heavy labour we may have to perform, then such recreations may be considered as preparations. They are then allowable, so far as they are necessary, either to refresh your mind, or to give you additional strength.

Such is the extent. All that extends beyond, is against God's view of them, and consequently forbidden.

Now, who does not often see that the gaieties of the world are neither preceded by work, nor followed by hard labour? They are sought for, for the love of the amusements alone, with no other view than that of tasting their



sweetness, or with the idea of leading an easy, agreeable life, thus employing their whole time immoderately, or without stint; consequently it is this excess, which makes it so culpable, and which, as it were, reverses the order of Providence.

I acknowledge that there are certain games, which are innocent, provided that they are not carried to excess. Recreation is necessary for the mind as well as for the body; the one, to avoid too great a strain upon the brain; the other, to relieve constant fatigues.

But gambling, playing the whole day, and stealing away the hours of night when repose and sleep are needed, amusements which are the sole occupation when they ought to occupy the least portion of our time here on earth; in a word, gaieties which we notice in high life, all such as these, I condemn. And have I not a right to condemn them? In them, I do not find the intentions of God; they are not even the teachings of nature. I do not ask you if you live as Christians, but as men.

Amusements so paltry, so evanescent, were not made for the purpose of clouding the intellect of a reasonable man.

PÈRE GIROUST.  
*Advent Sermon.*

. . . . .

You love gambling; it is this that destroys the conscience, this inordinate love of play; it is a mania which is no longer an amusement, but a business, a profession, a traffic, without stint or measure; and, if I may dare to say so, it is a mania, a madness, which drags you down from one abyss to another deeper still: *Abyssus abyssum invocat*. From this passion, arise those innumerable sins of which they are the consequence. From that mania, arise neglect of our duties, misrule of home, pernicious example you give to your children. From that proceed the squandering

away of your property, those unworthy meannesses, and, if I may use the term, those trickeries, which proceed from a greediness of gain. From this mania arise quarrels, oaths, swearing, and despair when all is lost. From that proceed those shameful resources, which you fancy that you are forced to have recourse to. Lastly, from this proceeds that dishonesty to seek for any excuse to supply yourself with funds, to carry on the sinful game.

One excess brings on another. Excess in the time employed in play, is attended by excess in the sums played for. To play but seldom, yet when you do play, to hazard much ; or to hazard a little, but play continually, are two excesses, both of which are forbidden by the law of God. But over and above these two excesses, there is a third, which is, to play often, and every time you play, to venture a large sum. Do not, however, mistake my meaning, when I say play in which you hazard a large sum. I speak not only of the great and the rich, but of all in general, and each in particular, conformably to their means and station in life. What is nothing for one, is much for another. One may easily bear what would hurt another ; and what for the former would be a small loss, might have fatal consequences for the latter.

Nevertheless, men will play ; and it is a rule of life, a rule to which they unalterably adhere ; so that no consideration can draw them from it. Cost what it will, they will go on ; and for what purpose ?

Oh, my brethren, cut off this love of play. It is far more easy to give it up entirely, than try to retrench it, or leave it off by degrees. Quit it once for all, and make a public avowal of it.

BOURDALOUE.

S

## 80.—On Hardness of Heart.

BISHOP MASCARON, PÈRES NOUET  
and NEPVUE.

"All the world is in extreme desolation, because there is no one who meditates in his heart."—JEREMIAS xii. 11.

[JULES MASCARON, the son of a celebrated barrister, was born at Marseilles in 1634. The richest inheritance that his father left him, was his own forensic eloquence. Early in life he joined the Congregation of the Oratory, and was soon made a professor of literature; but it was his extraordinary talent for preaching that gained him an immense reputation.

This young orator, after having visited the principal cities in France, proceeded to Paris. Louis XIV., who was not slow in recognising talent, engaged him to occupy the pulpit in the Chapel Royal, and it was at this time that the King presented him with the Bishopric of Tulle.

His funeral orations are considered to be equal to those of Bossuet and Flechier. In the year 1758, a Collection of Funeral Orations by Bossuet, Flechier, and Mascaron was published, and the volume met with great success. After some years of devoted attention to his diocese, he appeared at the Court for the last time in 1694. Louis XIV. was delighted to hear him again, and said to him, "You have aged, but your eloquence is as young as ever."

This eminent prelate died on the 16th November 1705, aged sixty-nine; deeply regretted by all his clergy.]

ST. AUGUSTINE compares the blindness of a soul to a man who is asleep. When our eyes are shut during sleep, we are blind; nevertheless we see something, for though our eyes are shut, our imagination is at work. We dream that we are very rich, we fancy that we are living in the lap of luxury; in a word, we picture to our mind strange

events. This is our case. We do not see things in the right light; we do not hear the mute language that ought to lead us up to God. No! our imagination conjures up fantastic phantoms.

We thought to have found true happiness in the wealth and riches of this world, and they have vanished. We sought for earthly joys, and these pleasures have become insipid.

When our soul is preparing to leave the body, then our eyes will be opened, and we shall then feel and know our terrible darkness.

MASCARON,  
*Bishop of Tulle.*

St. Augustine remarks that we are all born blind, because we are all born in sin. We are all born blind, and the dimness of our sight, is the universal scar, which original sin has imprinted on every heart, stifling the light of heaven in its birth, and surrounding the aurora of life, in the darkness of death.

Sin, which we inherit from our birth, leads us into an obscure night, deprives us of the sight of the Sovereign Good, and fills us with errors and illusions.

This blindness is so much the more to be deplored, because it grows with our growth, and being an original curse, it becomes free and voluntary in its growth; so much so, that our malice makes a personal crime out of an hereditary punishment, and thus, it corrupts every stream that flows from so poisonous a source.

It is the characteristic of sin to over-shadow every action, whether it be the banishment of grace, which is the light of the soul, or whether it blinds the understanding, thus rendering it incapable of receiving the light of the Holy Spirit, who abandons the sinner, and leaves him exposed to all kinds of dangers and misfortunes.

Oh! unhappy darkness, exclaims St. Augustine, in which I have lived. Oh! frightful blindness, which has hindered me from enjoying the light of heaven. Oh! deplorable ignorance, which hid the beauty and infinite goodness of God. Oh! beauty ever ancient, beauty ever new, more brilliant than the light of the sun, would that I had known and loved you sooner! Ah! why cannot I hide the many days and years in which I lived? Oh! that I could blot them out with my tears!

PÈRE NOUET.  
*Meditations.*

Hardness of heart leads to sad results. Light blinds or dazzles a hardened heart, it does not enlighten it. The just punishments of God, which weigh heavily on it, only make it rebellious, and do not subdue it. The scourge which God inflicts on it overwhelms, but does not humble it; miracles astonish, but do not convert it.

Would you wish to know the sure marks of hardness of heart? St. Bernard will give them to us. A hardened heart, he says, is a heart unbroken by remorse, unsoftened by devotion, and unmoved by prayer. It yields to no threats, which only harden it the more; it is unmindful of all the blessings of God, and unfaithful to grace. It blushes not at things most shameful, heeds no danger, has no love for brethren, no fear of God.

It forgets the past, neglects the present, and cares not for the future. It forgets its duty, and finally forgets itself.

There is the picture of a hardened heart.

How frightful! how terrible!

Is it your heart? If you have not all the *marks*, do you not, on examination, recognise some few like unto them?

LE PÈRE NEPOUE.  
*Reflections.*

## 81.—On Hypocrisy.

BOURDALOUE  
and the "*Dictionnaire Moral*."

"The hope of the hypocrite shall perish : he will himself condemn his own folly : that in which he trusted is but a spider's web."—JOB viii. 14.

THE Pharisees were, as the Gospel represents, of a mortified exterior, and piqued themselves on a strict observance of the laws ; and relying on that, were filled with a self-satisfied opinion of their own merit.

On this principle, they looked upon themselves as perfect and irreproachable : *In se confidebunt tanquam justi*. They took pains to keep themselves aloof from others, and believed themselves to be better than their brethren.

In their ordinary devotions, they fasted only to show that they had fasted, and disfigured their features, so as to attract the notice of the unsuspecting multitude.

Under the pretext of practising austerity, they assumed a studied appearance of a well-governed life.

Thus, without any other title than a sanctimonious regularity, they thought that they were entitled to occupy the foremost places in all festivals and assemblies. These are the marks of a false devotion and hypocrisy ; and to these our Saviour alluded.

There are some who are willing to practise Christian virtue, but at the same time, they wish to gain the credit. Some who do not like to be unnoticed, but wish to make a show, and to be different from others ; they affect humility, and do not associate with all.

Whence comes it, that singularity is so sought after? Because it is that which excites admiration, which is the charm of vanity.

If there is anything out of the way, it is there that they seek for it. And even in their penances, they wish to attract notice.

Unlike St. Augustine, who, when he was meditating his conversion, wished to keep it secret, lest the world might think, that his former wickedness was only a pretence to show off his present virtue.

A parade of regularity and mortification, induces them to usurp a certain kind of superiority, which neither God nor man gives them. For after that, they set themselves up as censors of all the world, and they, like to the Pharisees, consider themselves worthy of the highest places in the Church and state. They unscrupulously meddle with everything; and, what is more dangerous, they, under the pretence of piety, are not aware of their own failings, and so degenerate into an ambition, more criminal than that with which the Son of God reproached the Pharisees.

BOURDALOUE.

. . . . .  
If you wish to know the difference there is, between a hypocrite and a just man, between showy and solid piety, between human motives and Christian motives,—here are some marks.

Human virtue seeks for witnesses who praise, and its wish is to appear to be, than to be. True piety loves to be hidden, contented with being seen by God, and with the witness of its own conscience. Worldly goodness is full of presumption; there is no accident which it thinks cannot be repaired, no obstacle which cannot be overcome; whereas true virtue is ever mistrustful of self; it is never rash, and is always anxious to avoid occasions of sin, or to

fly from the presence of objects which may have been the cause of former falls.

Human virtue is proud, overbearing, and contemptuous ; it knows not what it is to yield, to be humble, or to obey ; it looks down disdainfully on those who have no merit ; it examines with a critical malignant eye those who are reputed to be good, and turning to itself, it is flattered at possessing something out of the ordinary way.

True piety is humble and submissive, glad to be surpassed by others ; and if there be any rigour to exercise, it is against itself ; and if there be any indulgence, or consideration to bestow, it is given to others.

Human goodness is interested ; self-interest is the main motive of all its actions, so that if there is no fortune to gain, no glory to establish, no reputation to preserve, such goodness remains inactive, so long as self is not disturbed.

True virtue makes a man thoroughly disinterested, in his reputation, in his worldly goods, in the contempt which others display, in the praises which are showered down upon him.

Finally, human virtue is fostered by pride, is constant through obstinacy, liberal through vanity, honest through interest, affable and mild through policy, and even humble through a refinement of self-love.

All these false and imposing pretensions to virtue, not having God in view, are like those empty titles, which nobles, who having sold their lands, still preserve their title and coats of arms.

Those people whom the world believed to be so generous, so faithful, so affable, so patient, so honest, so sincere, are like unto handsome mausoleums, on the outside of which are depicted representations of every virtue, and inside you find a frightful corruption.

From the "*Dictionnaire Moral*."



## 82.—On Idleness and Sloth.

BOURDALOUE.

“Why stand you here all the day idle?”

—MATTHEW xx. 6.

THERE is, says Holy Writ, a great occupation, imposed not on any one in particular, but on every one, and a heavy yoke, which all the children of Adam are compelled to bear. But where are these children? Is there no exception to this universal law? “From him that sitteth on a throne of glory, unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes” (*Eccles.* xl. 3).

The children of Adam include everybody, from royalty to the meanest beggar, “from him that weareth purple and beareth the crown, even to him that is covered with rough linen.”

This sentence excludes no one; princes and grandees of the world, are included with miserable wretches and with slaves.

In fact, my dear brother, whoever you may be, I ask you what dispenses you from work? Is it because you are high in the world, as if your grandeur could wipe out the stain of your origin, or exempt you from that universal curse which God has pronounced on the whole human race, namely, to eat your bread with the sweat of your brow?

But tell me, that high rank, that noble birth, that distinguished position which you make so much of, are they higher than kings and sovereign pontiffs?

Listen to the words of St. Bernard when he wrote to

the Pope Eugenius:—"I beseech you," said he, "with all the respect I owe to your Holiness, not to consider that you are raised above all the world, but take care that you are born to work, aye, even more than others; and if you wish to be exempt, you must first of all wipe out the stain of original sin, which the lustre of your purple and your tiara can never hide."

Consider, then, that a man who is born a slave, clothed in the livery of sin, must only think of work, and endure great fatigue, in order that he may better his condition in this world.

If we come to the difference of sex, we shall see that women are no less compelled to work, that they must busy themselves in household duties, and however easy these duties may appear, they must still be attended to. Solomon, wise as he was, did not despise them, for after having sought for a brave woman, and after he had found one, he says, she put her hands to her work, and that she rejoiced in laborious employments: *Manum suam misit ad fortia*.

There is no condition of life among men where idleness may not become a sin, and the higher the position, idleness and sloth are the more guilty. For instance, a young man of high connection, who remains idle in youth, without a wish to cultivate his mind by learning, and acquire such a knowledge requisite to prepare him for a post; when, through influence, he may be appointed to a responsible position, how will he acquit himself? God will not give him an infused science, for that would be a miracle. What will he do then? Why, he will be ignorant of the duties of his profession; and if, for example, he becomes to be a judge, he will judge badly.

Granted that he has the good intention of administering justice; from the want of legal knowledge he cannot, and he will be responsible for all the losses and injury that parties may have suffered. In addition to this, it is not

just and right, that he should learn experience at the expense of others; and however good his intention may be, a poor man may perchance lose a lawsuit which will deprive him of all his property. On this I cannot say too much, for if he be judge, he has another kind of idleness to battle with, and that is, he will not take the trouble to examine into matters, for he loves his pleasures more than the careful examination of right and wrong.

I should never finish, if I were to run through every condition of life. I could say, that through idleness and sloth it has happened that preachers and directors of souls have acquitted themselves so badly, that their sloth has produced frightful disorders in the functions of their ministry.

I could also say much on the negligence of mothers, a negligence which is the cause of the confusion we often notice in households; for when the mistress of the house is fond of frequenting theatres, balls, &c., what are the servants doing, and what will become of the children?

Instead of that, if she attended to her home duties, all would go well; her servants would do their duty, her children would be instructed, and would not be brought up, as they often unfortunately are, in idleness and sloth.

BOURDALOUE.

*From his Lenten Sermons.*

## 83.—On Ignorance.

PÈRE LA FONT.

“For some have not the knowledge of God : I speak it to your shame.”

— I CORINTHIANS XV. 34.

[PIERRE DE LA FONT, this zealous and charitable servant of God was born at Avignon. He became Prior of Valabrègue, and held also a high office in the church of Uzès. Wishing to found a seminary in the episcopal city, he resigned his priorship, in order to give his whole time and attention to the college. Being elected the superior, he wrote and published five volumes, called “*Entretiens Ecclesiastiques*,” for the instruction of his pupils. An extract from this book will be found further on. (See Alphabetical List of Authors.)

This pious and learned ecclesiastic ended his career of usefulness, at the commencement of the eighteenth century.]

If one could not sin through ignorance, it would be wrong, says St. Bernard, to blame the persecutors of the Apostles and Martyrs, since they did not believe that they committed wrong, by so cruelly putting them to death ; but, on the contrary, they considered that they rendered a great service to their gods by massacring their enemies.

It would also have been of little use that Jesus, hanging on the cross, should have prayed for His murderers, since, not knowing what they did, they were free from sin, and that even, according to St. Paul, had they known the King of Glory, they would not have nailed Him to the cross.

See, then, concludes this Father, into what a profound ignorance, those were plunged, who believed that they could sin through ignorance. From this, we must always understand that a voluntary culpable ignorance arises from a wanton negligence of being instructed.

According to the teaching of St. Thomas, we have two rules for our conduct and actions, namely, the law of God and our own conscience.

Now, it is not enough, in order to constitute a good action, that it should be conformable to one of these rules; it suffices to render it bad, if it is opposed to one of these two rules. Thus, one is not exempt from sin, continues this saintly Doctor, when it violates any precept of the law, even if it follows the judgment of a false conscience.

And in this same sense St. Augustine says, that people take that for good, which is in itself bad, and that to persevere in this erroneous belief, they are not free from sin, since this false persuasion, is in itself a sin: *Si quis bonum putaverit esse quod malum est, et fecerit, hoc putando ubique peccat* (Epis. cliv.) And if you wish to know why this error and ignorance is a sin, because one has not been willing, or has neglected to know the law; for if one is in invincible ignorance, then that ignorance and that error, being involuntary, would no longer be sin.

One cannot excuse from sin, those heretics who live among Catholics, although they doubt not the truth of their own religion, and although they think that they are in the right path, because they have every means of clearing up their doubts, and opportunities are not wanting to disabuse them, if they really wished to be instructed in the faith.

But obstinacy joined to prejudice, convenience, and advantages which they find in the state of life in which they have been reared, or which they may have embraced through debauchery, or through error, they persist in their culpable ignorance.

Thus, when such as these, in their fancied security, blaspheme against the true religion, which they look upon as false; when they cry it down; when they pettily persecute the defenders of it, or revile them by cruel calumny,

and inflict on them outrage and insult, they are not exempt from sin, although they may have, through ignorance, been driven to excess, and by this means called to their aid a false zeal, which is so opposed to the law of God. This ignorance will never excuse them of all these crimes, since it is an inexcusable sin to be a heretic, and not take every means in their power to undeceive themselves.

We must, however, remark, that the care required by some who plead ignorance as an excuse, does not apply to others, who need a more searching inquiry into the truth.

If it only depended on some trivial point, such as if a certain day was a feast-day or a fast-day, a competent authority can be applied to ; and if there be some mistake, it can be easily or readily explained. But when it refers to a matter of equity, such as if a contract is usurious or not ; or if it be permitted to expose to public view, engravings or pictures of scandalous nudities, then we ought not to be content with consulting any one, who may be of our own opinion.

When one has on hand an important lawsuit, does he not apply to the ablest lawyer ? Or when we are seized with a dangerous illness, do we not seek the advice of the most experienced and cleverest physician ?

Can any one, then, look upon the laws of God, and the precepts of the Church, as simply an invincible ignorance, when they can be so easily explained, by simply taking the same pains they employ in temporal affairs ?

To act otherwise, is simply to show a manifest indifference for their eternal salvation.

REV. PÈRE LA FONT.  
*Sixth after Pent.*

## 84.—On Immodest Attire, Fashion, etc.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM and ST. CYPRIAN.

"The attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the woman, show what she is."—ECCLESIASTICUS xix. 29.

FROM whom do those women attract notice—women who are of the world most worldly—women whose vanity leads them to employ every artifice to attract remark and win esteem? Is it from the good and pious? Oh, no! for they look upon them with horror, seeing that they dishonour Jesus Christ and ruin His religion. Is it from clever people? No, for they regard them with indignation, seeing that by their vain display they are anxious to astonish, and take them by surprise. Is it from rakes and libertines they seek esteem? From these, doubtless, they would rather fly than seek. Oh, if they only knew how they speak of them, how coarsely they criticise them, their confusion would be equal to their pride.

You show yourselves in public, ye worldlings, with all that furniture of vanity. You do not even spare the temple of the living God, whose sanctity should not be violated by your luxuries, for the church was not built for the display of all such vanities. We should appear therein richly clothed with grace and virtue, not decked out with gold and jewels. Nevertheless you attend church dressed out as if you were going to a ball, or like actresses on the stage, so careful are you to be noticed, or rather to be laughed at, by those who see you.

When divine service is over, and all are returning homewards, your vanities and follies, are the theme of their conversation; they forget the important instructions left us by St. Paul and the Prophets, and can only talk of the value of your beautiful dresses and of the lustre of your jewellery.

Tell us, I entreat, what are the useful advantages to be drawn from these precious stones and from these costly dresses? You tell me that you are satisfied with yourself, and that you take delight in that magnificence. But alas! I ask what benefit you derive from your vanities, and they only tell me of the harm they do.

There is nothing more deplorable, than to be ever running after frivolous fashions, to take a pleasure in studying them. Shameful and shocking must that slavery be, when its golden chains are enjoyed.

How can a Christian female apply herself as she ought, to any exercise of devotion or solid piety? how can she despise the follies of the age if she encourages a taste for finery? In time she will experience so great a distaste for prayer, that she will not like to hear it named.

You will perhaps reply, that you have made yourself admired by all who saw you. But this is an additional misfortune, that these costly trinkets should have gone so far as to feed your growing vanity and pride!

Is it not an evil most grievous to be overwhelmed with cares so vain and restless, to neglect the beauty of the soul and the love of one's salvation; to fill one's self with pride, vanity, and conceit; to be, as it were, intoxicated with the love of the world; willingly to give up going to those sacred places, where your thoughts should be raised to God; to have no fear of prostituting the dignity of your soul, and subject that soul to things so base and so unworthy?

You will perchance reply, that when you frequent assem-



blies and promenades, every one turns round to look at you. It is for that very reason, you should shrink from gaudy attire, in order that you should not expose yourself to the gaze of every man, that you should not give any one an opportunity for making scandalous remarks.

Not one of those who gaze upon you, will hold you in the esteem you imagine you have secured. You will be the laughing-stock of every one, and people will set you down as a vain ambitious woman, as one who is wishing to be admired, as one absorbed in the love and vanities of the world.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM  
*Passim.*

. . . . .

Do you not tremble, ye gay and worldly women, at the thought that, when our Lord and Saviour shall come to judge the living and the dead, He will bid you leave His presence for evermore, and that He will thus reproach you?

Depart from Me, you are not My work, and I cannot trace the least resemblance to your former self. The paint, powder, false curls, and other vain appliances have so altered and disguised you, that I cannot recognise that you once belonged to Me. You will not be able to see Me, disguised as you are by face, eyes, and features, so utterly spoiled and disguised by My enemy the devil. You have followed him; you have selected the brilliant hues of the serpent's skin; it is from your enemy you have learned and kept those embellishments and fineries; you will be with him for ever and for ever. My kingdom is not for such as you, and no part of it can you ever share with Me.

ST. CYPRIAN.  
*De Habitu Virginum.*

## 85.—On Impurity.

ST. BASIL, and PÈRES HOUDRY and DE LA RUE.

"When concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin : when it is completed, begetteth death."—JAMES i. 15.

YOU will sometimes meet with old men, whose gravity and age give them an appearance of severity, who are modest in society, and who are much esteemed for their apparent goodness, but who secretly and heartily indulge in every sort of vice, which they carefully conceal from human eye.

They, in their imagination, picture objects which they delight in; the idea flatters them, and leads them to indulge in indelicate pleasures, unseen and unnoticed.

These sins are committed in the heart, and will there remain hidden, until the coming of our Lord, who will bring to light every dark mystery, and will expose to the whole world, the secrets of the heart.

We must, then, particularly watch over our thoughts, for deeds which spring from our free-will, require time, assistance, and opportunity, but the workings of the brain are active in a moment, without trouble, without hindrance, without waiting for opportunity.

ST. BASIL.

Not only is this passion a sin, but it is the epitome of every sin; it includes sins of the eye, sins of word, sins of thought, sins of desire.

As for sins of deed, who would dare to paint them? I have no wish to place so foul a sight before you.

Property, riches, talent, heart, will be, and on every possible opportunity are, all employed in its service.

Desires are fondly cherished, when deeds cannot satisfy.

A lascivious man is a man of sin, because he disseminates sin, wheresoever he may be; in every place, in public, in private, in intrigues, &c.

The evils which impurity causes to those who indulge in this vice, are numberless; it spares nothing; it undermines the health, and youth is soon succeeded by a peevish, dissolute, premature old age.

There is no trouble they will not undertake, no constitution they will not sacrifice, no amount of money they will not squander away. Have they ruined their prospects in life? To indulge in luxury and continue to satisfy their lustful desires, they will seek to find means at any price.

But this vice is not content with being the cause of ruin of families, but it haunts them in their dreams.

From this arise jealousies, divorces, and sad estrangements. From this succeed assassination, murder, poison, conspiracy, and all felonious plots, to supplant a dangerous rival, or get rid of a jealous accomplice.

Meditate for a while on the scourges and punishments which God has inflicted on this sin. Holy Scripture is content to threaten other vices, but see how it inveighs against, and casts a thunder-bolt on this.

The Deluge, was it not a punishment? The burning of a whole city, was it not the result of a just vengeance?

If this sin was the reason why God repented of having created man, and made Him resolve to annihilate him, how can you look upon it as a pardonable sin?

The waters spread over the surface of the earth, flames consume Sodom—do not these teach you that God is the defender of purity, the avenger of incontinence?

Is it that such sins should have become less enormous, that God the Son deigned to be born of the Virgin Mary?

Ah! place before you the thought of St. Augustine.

“What! shall I purchase torments without end, for a vain and transient pleasure? Pleasures will pass away, but eternity will never pass away; pleasures vanish, but the penalty remains.”

REV. PÈRE V. HOUDRY.

[CHARLES DE LA RUE was born in Paris in the year 1643. He entered the Jesuit College and subsequently became Professor of the Humanities and Rhetoric. He early distinguished himself by his talent for poetry. In the year 1667 he wrote a long Latin poem on the conquests of Louis XVI.; this the great Corneille translated, and presented the Latin original and French versification to the King, who was pleased to express his gracious approval.

The learned Jesuit petitioned to be sent to the Missions in Canada, but was refused, as his superiors deemed it best that he should work out his salvation in France.

The published works of this illustrious Latin scholar are numerous. He died in Paris in the year 1725, aged eighty-two.]

God speaking to Noah, told him that His spirit would not dwell in man, because he was only flesh. *Non permanebit spiritus meus in homine quia caro est.* Nevertheless, I hear that the unchaste allege this as a reason, for making this sin excusable—human weakness, which is only flesh; but I say, that for this reason, immodesty and impurity will be punished by God.

It is for that, all should be more cautious and be not without fear. *Quia caro est.* It is for that, one ought to seek for the help of that grace, which God has promised to all. *Quia caro est.* It is for that, that man, being so weak and frail, should ever have recourse to prayer, to occasional retreats, and to fly from all occasions of sin. *Quia caro est.* It is for that, you should not rashly expose yourself to temptation, or be found frequenting dangerous places, where there are immodest eyes upon you. And this for fear of losing the grace of the Holy Ghost, who departs from the impure. *Quia caro est.*

REV. PÈRE DE LA RUE.

## 86.—On Ingratitude.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM, ST. AMBROSE,  
and BOURDALOUE.

‘ Of the ten lepers cured, there is no one found to return and give glory to God but this stranger.’—LUKE xvii. 18.

IT would be a monstrous ingratitude to receive daily many blessings of the Divine Goodness, and not to acknowledge your gratitude, if not in deeds, at any rate, in words and canticles.

Besides that, if this gratitude is due to Him, it is no less advantageous to ourselves. God has no need of us, but we have every need of Him.

The thanksgiving which we offer to Him, adds nothing to what He is, but it helps us to love Him more, and to repose a greater confidence in Him.

For if the remembrance of benefits we have received from men, induces us to love them more, there can be no doubt, that meditating on the graces which Almighty God has showered upon us, we should naturally feel more desire to love Him, more prompt to obey Him.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

. . . . .

We ought to imitate the liberality of the soil, which repays, with usurious interest, the smallest seed, that is sown therein. Holy Scripture compares an ungrateful person to a field or vine, which remains barren if not carefully cultivated; on the other hand, a grateful man is like

a fruitful field, and which increases in value a hundred-fold.

It is thus that we must act towards those from whom we have received benefits, and not be like the ungrateful and avaricious land, which retains the seed.

It is not every one who has the power of doing good, but we can always show our gratitude, for ingratitude is an unpardonable vice.

ST. AMBROSE.

. . . . .

St. Bernard, pondering on the many graces which God had bestowed upon him, and of His immense love for us all, cries out: "O Lord, I have nothing to give you in return for so many blessings I have received from Your merciful goodness. When I look upon my own nothingness, I am so confused that I dare not raise my eyes, but when I consider that You are rich in Yourself, that You have no need of me, and that You seek for my heart and not my riches: ah! I am quite consoled. When I see in the Gospel that a poor woman, who drops two little pieces of money in the poor-box, receives from Your lips more praises than do those rich Pharisees, who place, therein, large sums, I begin to hope.

"I have only two small pieces, and these are, my heart and my body. You are the Master of the latter, take Thou possession of the former. I give it to You; it is Yours on the principle of justice, love, and gratitude."

A faithful and truly grateful soul ought to imitate the conduct of that prince mentioned in the Book of Esther, where it is said that he wrote down, and kept an account of all the services his brave followers had done for him during his reign, in order that, by reading of them often, he was forced to acknowledge them.

This is what a faithful soul should do, in order to remind

Him of the many graces and favours God has bestowed upon him, during the whole course of his life. Ah! what would such a soul do? Would it not read over the list with care, and ponder on it every day?

See, here is the time when, by an especial grace, I was called to fulfil duties in the Church or in the world. Here are so many favours received; here so many holy inspirations; here, so many good works; here, so many averted dangers; in a word, here are so many benefits received. Think of them, O my soul, and never forget them, and say with the prophet: "I will bless my God for ever and ever, and I will never cease to sing His praise." The last thought, when I retire to rest, will be to thank God, and the first prayer on awaking, shall be to bless Him.

If we closely examine the conduct of the greater portion of sinners, we would be easily convinced that there are gifts and blessings of God, which are made use of for the purpose of adding to their sins. If God has given extra beauty to that woman, to what use does she devote it? Alas! to idolise her body, and to draw around her a crowd of admirers. If God has given health and strength to that man, of what use are they to him? for he destroys them both with debauchery and vice.

If to another has been given the gift of knowledge and science, does he not use them to disseminate his own erroneous opinions, or to impugn the dogmas of our holy mother the Church? If to another, fortune and riches, are not these squandered away in pleasure or ambition?

And thus it is with other gifts, which are all received from heaven.

BOURDALOUE

## 87.—On Intemperance.

PÈRES DE LA COLOMBIÈRE and HOUDRY,  
and ST. AMBROSE.

"Woe to you that rise up early in the morning to follow drunkenness, and to drink till the evening, to be inflamed with wine."—ISAIAH v. 11.

A REASONABLE man eats in order to give strength to his body, lest its weakness might have an effect on his mind ; but those who are addicted to intemperance, eat even to clouding their intellect and ruining their body. They eat merely for the sake of eating. There are some people whose body is of no use to the intellect (unlike the saints, who complained of having a body, which occasioned so much trouble to the mind); such as these would like to be deprived of the qualms of conscience, in order to partake of the pleasures of beasts, pleasures they constantly seek and sigh for.

They do not eat to live, since nothing is so pernicious to health as excess in delicacies and made dishes, and nothing is so conducive to a healthy and long life as a frugal and well-regulated table.

Is it that we are slaves of our body, and that everything ought to be sacrificed to gratify that insatiable animal? One ought to take food as one would take remedies. Necessity ought to rule our inclination, so as to free us from the inconvenience of hunger, and not that concupiscence which lays a snare in the pleasure that follows; that solace, which we seek for, in eating and drinking.

Thus we do, for this single pleasure what we ought to



do through necessity; from this follows that we seek to deceive ourselves, persuading ourselves that we owe to our health what we give to the passion of intemperance.

REV. PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

*Christian Reflections.*

. . . . .

All the Doctors of the Church tell us that that state of intoxication, which deprives us of grace and reason at the same time, is a mortal sin.

It is this that St. Augustine calls a great sin, a monster of crime; in fact, it is a brutal stupidity and a wanton blindness to sell (like another Esau) one's right to the inheritance of heaven, the hope of an eternal happiness, for the sake of some glasses of wine; rivalling that madman who sold his claim to the paternal estate for a few lentils, to satisfy his inordinate appetite.

But St. Paul expressly names it, and places the vice of drunkenness on the list of those sins, which are excluded from heaven. *Nolite errare*, do not be deceived, says he; do not flatter yourself that it is a venial sin: "Drunkards shall not possess the kingdom of heaven" (1 Cor. vii.)

In a former chapter he says, that this kingdom and happiness which are destined for us, are not intended for those who eat and drink. Those, therefore, who pamper their appetites, those who are slaves of intemperance, have no claim or right.

Drunkenness is the source of an infinite number of sins, but among those which are its boon companions the most universal is, that of impurity. Take heed and avoid drinking to excess, says the Apostle (*Ephes. v.*), because it infallibly enkindles the shocking vice of impurity. Again, it is St. Jerome who says, that he who is always full of wine is easily led to the commission of shameful brutalities, and he confirms this truth by quoting the example of Loth: *Quem Sodoma non vicit vina vicerunt*. What more

astounding than to see a man who was preserved in innocence in the centre of the city of Sodom ; he drinks a little too much wine, and commits a frightful incest.

A man addicted to wine, says St. Chrysostom, is fit for nothing, for of what use is such a man? Would he be able to keep a secret? Two or three glasses of wine would make him so talkative that he would reveal everything. How could you confide an affair of importance to him? No! says the saint, such a man is useless, he is fit for nothing, he is a fool, he must be left to himself, he does not deserve a thought: *Ebriosus ad omnia negotia ineptus*. This same Father represents the ugliness and infamy of this vice in such animated language that strikes one with horror. How shameful is intoxication, he exclaims; can any one imagine a man more despicable than he who is habitually tipsy? He lowers himself in the eyes of his servants, it makes him a laughing-stock to his enemies, and even his friends put him down as a fool. All look upon him as an object deserving of the contempt and hatred of all.

If there be any here who are addicted to this vice, hear the words which the Prophet Joel addresses to you on the part of God: "Awake, ye that are drunk, and weep and mourn, all ye that take delight in drinking sweet wine;" arise from your negligence, at the sound of the threats of the anger of God; weep and send up your sighs to heaven, in order to avert His justice, which is ready to deliver the world from a useless burden and a scandal to all men.

Instead of drowning your intellect in wine, apply it to more serious work; avoid the impending misery, and henceforth lead a life more worthy of a man and a Christian. Give up a habit which renders you unfit to associate with men. Detest a vice which is as odious as it is wicked; fly from the society of those who encourage and join you in those unworthy debaucheries, dissipations which will

easily lead to the loss of honour, health, the life of your body, the loss of your soul, and eventually drag you to the gates of eternal perdition.

“Woe to you that rise early in the morning to follow drunkenness, and to drink till the evening, to be inflamed with wine,” says the Prophet Isaiah; and St. Paul says, that such people have no other god but their belly, which is as much as to say that they are idolaters, for they make a god of their own body for no other purpose than that of satisfying an inordinate appetite, and thus idolising their stomach.

The misfortune of this kind of men is such, that the Apostle, with tears in his eyes, can only deplore their blindness and look upon their misery as meriting God’s vengeance: *Nunc autem et flens dico, inimicos crucis Christi, quorum finis interitus, et gloria in confusione ipsorum.*

PÈRE HOUDRY.

. . . . .

Excess in eating and drinking has killed many a man, frugality has killed no one; immoderate use of wine has injured many a constitution, temperance has never done any harm. Many have died in the midst of banquets, and have soiled the very tables with their heated blood.

You invite your friends to a feast, and you lead them to death; you ask them to a merry-making, and you conduct them to a tomb; you promise them the greatest delicacies, and you condemn them to the most exquisite tortures; you fill them with wines, and lo! it is their poison.

ST. AMBROSE.  
*De Jejuniis.*

## 88.—On Lying and Trickery.

PÈRES HOUDRY, HELIODORE,  
and ST. AUGUSTINE.

“God hateth a deceitful witness that uttereth lies.”—PROVERBS vi. 19.

“Let no man overreach nor circumvent his brother in business.”

—THESSALONIANS iv. 6.

WE have in the New Testament, several examples of duplicity and trickery.

The dissimulation and pretended concern Herod the Ascalonite displayed to the Three Kings, when he asked them to return to Jerusalem, and tell him where the Messiah was born, so that he might go and adore the new-born King. As he fully intended to murder the Infant Jesus, this lying deceiver will cause the name of Herod to be held in horror, for all ages.

The second Herod, called the Tetrarch, was the successor of the first, and was the Governor, when Jesus was sent to be tried. He was a man full of deceit, and our Lord gave him the name of the fox, to work his cunning and duplicity; and far from wishing to perform miracles before him, our Saviour did not deign to answer him a word.

The most evident punishment that God has ever exercised on those who fail in sincerity, and use a lying deceit, was that of Ananias and Sapphira, related in the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. They, having sold their piece of land, and having, by fraud, kept back part of the price of the land, contrary to the promise they had made to bring the whole.

Their bad faith cost them their lives. They were masters of the money, which they could have kept without injustice ; but because they told untruths, and agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, they were punished for their deceit.

REV. PÈRE V. HOUDRY, S.J.

One of the strongest reasons that can be urged against lying, is, the infamous consequences that accrue from such a habit.

A lie covers its author with confusion, and a man who has acquired the habit of telling falsehoods, becomes in fact the universal horror of all who know him. Because a lie usually precedes many other vices, it makes use of candour and truth only through motives of avarice, pride, jealousy, impurity, impiety, or some other sin ; consequently, these can only proceed from a mass of corruption.

These are the reasons why we have so bad an opinion of liars, and this is why the Holy Scripture describes the liar, as a foul blot and an everlasting shame.

Now, you who cannot endure to be charged with practising this vice ; you who would expose your life and salvation, and impel you to wipe out the implied reproach with your blood, if the law did not put a stop to your blind fury ; you who blush and are ashamed that men should know what you cannot endure to be charged with ; listen to and reflect on the threats and judgments of the God of truth, for He has so great a horror of lying and deceit, that He has said : *Perdes omnes qui loquuntur mendacium.*

It would take up too much space to give all the reasons, which would induce us to give up lying and deceit. It is sufficient to know that the lie increases other greater sins, that it lessens the simplicity of virtue, and it scandalises truth. Avarice is rendered more criminal, when in order

to secure or purchase another person's property, it makes use of a false oath; pride is more sinful when it circulates false reports in order to gain the approbation of some, or to avoid some affront. Hatred is rendered more intense, when it forges imaginary crimes, in order to deprive the innocent of their honour. Heresy is more detestable, when it designedly misinterprets the sense and meaning of Holy Scripture, the Fathers and the precepts of the Church. Virtue loses its simplicity, when deceit is introduced. Humility is not entirely innocent, if it induces a man to lie in order to hide his perfection. Mercy becomes sinful, if it excite a man to make use of a falsehood for the purpose of giving relief to the poor, or with the intention of checking the vices of his neighbour. Justice partakes of injustice, when by use of an untruth, it ascertains the truth of an important fact.

Other virtues cannot possibly preserve their purity, however good the intention may be, if a lie or a deceit be made use of.

FATHER HELIODORE of Paris (Capuchin).

. . . . .

When the tongue says one thing, and the heart means another; this is deceit, and a lie.

If through humility you circulate a lie, if you had not committed a sin of lying before, you become, by lying, what you were not before, a sinner.

The sin of lying is not solely committed by word of mouth, but by deeds designedly carried out for the purpose of deceiving. It is a lie to call yourself a Christian, when you do not practise the works of Jesus Christ.

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*Enchiridon.*

## 89.—On Prosperity, its Dangers, and Prosperity of the Wicked.

ST. AUGUSTINE and MASSILLON.

“Why then do the wicked live? Are they advanced and strengthened with riches? Their houses are secure and peaceable, and the rod of God is not upon them.”—JOB xxi. 7-9.

THE continued prosperity of sinners, is the greatest of all misfortunes for them. The less our Lord disturbs their torpor, the more He punishes them after. It is at that time that vicious habits increase in power day by day; it is then that they indulge themselves the more, that they delude themselves, that they are blinded more and more, to the important interests of their salvation.

But the mad multitude do not reason thus. According to the idea of the majority, the world is pleased when the greater part of common people are like princes through good fortune, although they would be poor, and the very reverse of pious; when theatres are thriving, although religion may be despised; when luxury attracts the notice of all, although Christian charity would be neglected; when the dissolute, well nigh exhaust the well-filled purse to satisfy their excessive wants, although the poor can find none to relieve their extremest need.

Nevertheless, if God permits these disorders to reign in the world, be sure that at that time, He is the more irritated against us. His most terrible vengeance is to leave for a while crimes unpunished.

If, on the contrary, He deprives us of every kind of luxurious pleasure, of good living, of theatres and other amusements, of the extravagance of the age, it is then He manifests to us His mercy.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

*From his Fifth Letter to Marcellinus.*

Opportunities and all exterior things contribute to withdraw the prosperous man from the way of salvation, and these are for him so many obstacles, too difficult for a soul accustomed to effeminacy to surmount. Everything concurs to feed and cherish vices in his heart, more especially the most dangerous passions, and a crowd of objects fascinates his every sense.

Those miserable parasites of the fortune of a great man make a study of his weaknesses, and neglect nothing which can give him pleasure; theatres, games, acquaintances, flatteries, intrigues cleverly begun, and as cleverly carried out, nothing is forgotten; each one seeks to take him by surprise, and each one glories when that success is gained.

These flatterers who gather round about him, studiously contrive to bring fresh incentives to feed his passions. Thus everything concurs to make even the contented forget that there is a holy and a happy land, to which they ought to aspire to reach.

It is here, O Lord, that I adore Thy secret judgments; for, seeing on the earth the good in trouble, and the wicked laden with the blessings of prosperity, the one in misery, the other in plenty, the one in poverty, the other in prosperity, it cannot be wondered at, that I should be surprised at a sight which appears to be so contrary to Thy wise and just providence. When I see the splendidly garnished table of the proud rich man, whilst a poor Lazarus begs for the crumbs which fall from his table, and is even cruelly refused; when I see so many unworthy wretches, superabundantly supplied with all that contributes to ease and comfort, whilst so many good and honest people are in want of even the necessities of life, I confess to Thee, says the Prophet, that my feet shake under me, and I am tempted to question Divine Providence for showing too much indulgence to the wicked, and too much harshness



to the good, or that I should go so far as to accuse Thee of injustice.

For why, I say to myself, should that man, who is only nominally a Christian, and a heathen in his manners and actions—why does he enjoy an easy life, a peace here on earth, whilst the faithful and pious man groans and sighs under the weight of his miseries? Why should everything smile on the rich unjust? The princely treasures are only open for him, every luxury shines for him, the hail and storm do not injure his lands, the earth, the sky, the elements, seem to contribute to the joy and pleasure of the sinner, while the good poor man dwells here on earth, helpless and unassisted; and whilst the former is well nigh satiated with the best of everything, the good man sees himself alone and abandoned by all, despised by the world, and deprived of help.

Do not fall into the fatal error of believing that worldly prosperity may be a favour which God grants to His favoured ones. God often, in His anger, gives riches and honours which are prayed for, and He grants them by punishing, says St. Augustine. He would have destined you to live a retired life in humility and lowliness, in order to lead you, by those means, to the height of glory; but you have obstinately rejected His merciful intentions, you have mapped out your own way of life, and, intoxicated with success, you have tried to subject His will to your own; you have made your own choice, He grants what you ask for, and He hears you in His anger. Riches, honours, dignities, fortune, grandeur, success, and robust health are yours for a time; all these, however, are given to you as a punishment.

MASSILLON.

*From a Sermon on Prosperity.*

## 90.—On Rash Judgment.

SS. FRANCIS DE SALES, JOHN OF GOD, and AUGUSTINE,  
and L'ABBÉ DE LA TRAPPE.

"Judge not, that you may not be judged : for, with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged. —MATTHEW vii. 1.

"JUDGE not, and you shall not be judged," says the Saviour of our souls: "Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned" (*St. Luke* vi. 37). No, says the holy Apostle (*1 Cor.* iv. 5), "Judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart."

Oh, how displeasing are rash judgments to God! The judgments of the children of men are rash, because they are not the judges one of another, and therefore usurp to themselves the office of our Lord. They are rash, because the principal malice of sin depends on the intent of the heart, which is an impenetrable secret to us. They are not only rash, but also impertinent, because every one has enough to do to judge himself, without taking upon him to judge his neighbour.

In order to our being hereafter judged, it is equally necessary we should refrain from judging others, as to be careful to judge ourselves. For as our Lord forbids the one, so the Apostle enjoins the other, saying, that if we judged ourselves we should not be judged.

But, O Good God! we act quite the contrary; for by judging our neighbour on every occasion, we do that

which is forbidden; and by not judging ourselves, we neglect to put that which we are strictly commanded into practice.

We must apply remedies against rash judgments, according to their different causes. There are some hearts naturally so sour, bitter, and harsh, as to make everything bitter and sour that they receive, turning judgment, as the Prophet Amos says, into wormwood, by never judging their neighbour, but with rigour and harshness.

Some judge rashly, not through harshness, but through pride; imagining, that in the same proportion as they depress the honour of other men, they raise their own. "I am not like the rest of men," said the foolish Pharisee (*Luke* xviii. 11).

Others to excuse themselves to themselves, and to assuage the remorse of their own consciences, willingly judge others to be guilty of the same kind of vice to which they themselves are addicted, or of some other as great; thinking that the multitude of offenders make the sin the less blamable.

Others judge through passion and prejudice, always thinking well of what they love, and ill of what they hate.

In fine, fear, ambition, and other such weaknesses of the mind, frequently contribute towards the breeding of suspicious and rash judgments.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.  
*Devout Life.*

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[ST. JOHN OF GOD was born in 1495, in a small town in Portugal called Monte Major-el-Novo. His parents were so poor that he was compelled to work as a servant. A sermon he heard from the blessed John of Avila so moved him, that he resolved to consecrate the remainder of his life to God and His poor. The zeal of this Saint overcame every obstacle. He began his work in a small house in Granada, and from this poor dwelling, arose a magnificent hospital

which exists to this day. It was there, that St. John laid the first foundation of an Order which was approved of by St. Pius V. in 1572.

The Life of this grand Saint by Canon Cianfogni has been ably translated under the editorship of the Rev. Father John Bowden, and is published by R. Washbourne.]

How dare we judge others? Circumstances are so varied, that it is almost impossible that we should not make a mistake. It is the magistrate's duty to judge the guilty; our duty, as regards our neighbour, is ever to take the defensive side.

Nothing shows the wisdom and truth of those words from Holy Writ, "Judge not, and you will not be judged"—"Condemn not, and you will not be condemned"—as the injustice and rashness of our judgments.

To judge, we must know the heart of the person accused, and this is a sanctuary reserved for God alone.

Ah! if we only knew our own shortcomings, we should rather accuse and judge ourselves.

ST. JOHN OF GOD.

. . . . .

It is the ordinary custom of those who have not within them the Spirit of God, to be scandalised at the most virtuous and edifying of actions.

This we see in the Gospel of St. Luke, "A sinner, knowing that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and standing behind at His feet, she began to wash His feet with her tears." This woman outwardly displayed her love and respect; she threw herself at the feet of the Son of God, full of grief, incapable of fear, and pierced with a lively sorrow for having offended Him.

Such were the feelings with which our Lord had inspired her.

However, the Pharisee formed a rash judgment; for he said, "This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely

who and what manner of woman this is that touched Him, that she is a sinner."

But the Saviour, who knew her better, judged otherwise; for she had blotted out her iniquities by the abundance of her tears, by the excess of her love, and by her contrition.

*Amando veritatem, lavit lachrymis maculas criminis.*

This is an example which ought indeed to be consoling to those who, in actions which they have performed for the honour and glory of God, may have drawn upon themselves rash and false judgments, censure, and condemnation of others,

L'ABBÉ DE LA TRAPPE.

*Reflections.*

. . . . .

Rash judgment seldom hurts the one upon whom it falls, but the one who judges rashly, cannot fail to injure himself.

There are two things we should guard against in forming rash judgments; the first is, when it is uncertain from what motive, such and such a thing may have been done; the second is, when we cannot foresee what may, one day, be the state of that man, who now appears to be, either good or bad.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

*On the Sermon on the Mount.*

## 91.—On Scandal.

BOURDALOUE, ST. CYPRIAN, and  
PÈRE HOUDRY.

"It must needs be that scandals come; but, nevertheless, woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh."—MATTHEW xviii. 7.

SCANDAL is a diabolical sin, and the reason which St. Chrysostom gives us is conclusive enough. For (according to the Gospel) the particular characteristic of Satan is, that he was a murderer from the beginning: *Ille homicida erat ab initio*; and he has not only been a homicide, continues this holy Doctor, but because, from the beginning of the world, he has been the cause of souls being lost by seducing them, by drawing them into snares, by making them yield to temptation, by putting every obstacle in the way of their conversion.

Now, is not this the constant employment of the libertine, the vicious man, the man swayed by the spirit of debauchery, seeks on all sides (if I may dare to use the expression) for an easy prey for his sensuality? What doth he besides, and in what is his scandalous life taken up? Is it not in deceiving and damaging souls, in taking advantage of their weakness, in imposing on their simplicity, in making the most of their imprudence, in flattering their vanity, in undermining their religion, in triumphing over their modesty, in dissipating their just fears, in rendering ineffectual all their good desires? Is it not in keeping them from the ways of God, when, touched with His grace, they become conscious of their misery, and sincerely desirous of recovering their innocence?

Are not these, O sinner, the deeds of darkness in which

your infamous life is spent? Is it not then the employment of the devil in which you have been engaged?

You do, then, the office of the evil one, and all the more dangerously, because they whom you scandalise, being accustomed to be led by the senses, are the more exposed to your baneful insinuations, and more impressed by them, since you move amongst them a visible and incarnate demon. The devil was, of himself, a murderer from the beginning, but is a murderer through you. It is you who are his deputy, who furnish him with weapons, you who carry on his work, you who, in his place, have become the tempter, the murderer of souls, by sacrificing these unfortunate victims to your passions and pleasures: *Ille homicida erat ab initio.*

BOURDALOUE  
*Advent Sermon.*

. . . . .

St. Cyprian, who lived in the third century, in explaining the reason why God permits that His own should be persecuted, gives us a picture of the manners and customs of his time.

Bellarmin, in his work "On the Sighs of the Dove," quotes the whole passage, and says: "Would to God that we had not reason to bewail the same scandalous practices in our time."

Each one thinks only of enriching himself; and forgetting what the first Christians had done at the time of the Apostles, and what they ought always to do, they cherished so great a longing for riches, that they fancied that they never could accumulate sufficient. There was no devotion in the priests, no faith in the ministers of the gospel, no regularity in their manners, no charity in their works.

The women painted their faces, the men knew how to change the colour of the hair, and they quite made an art of dyeing. You could detect something approaching

to lasciviousness in their eyes and looks, and so careful was their studied talk, that they sought to impose on the simple, and tried to deceive each other.

They swore not only unnecessarily, but falsely. They, with insupportable conceit, despised the orders of their superiors. They had no fear of slandering their neighbour, and they in their hearts cherished mortal hatreds.

Several prelates, who ought to have induced people to be pious by showing a good example, neglected their duty, quitted their dioceses, abandoned their flocks, and went into far-off countries in order to carry on a business that was mean and unworthy of them. They took no heed of the pressing wants of the few that were faithful. Their only endeavour was to amass riches, to deprive others of their lands, and to multiply their wealth by usury.

ST. CYPRIAN.

. . . . .

There is nothing that St. Augustine deplores more, in his Confessions, than the misery of the bad example he had followed, when a youth. He was naturally inclined to be good, he had even received a sufficiently good education, and he confesses, without flattery or vanity, in a book in which he seeks his own confusion, that he would have never committed the atrocities of a dissipated, ill-regulated life, had it not been for the bad example that his companions had given him. Here are the words he uses: "O friendship, worse than the most cruel enmity, which seduced my mind, and dragged me on to sin—'Let us go'—'Let us do'—still dinning incessantly in my ears so vividly, that it is shameful to have some shame for acting so ill."

We have, in the words and experience of this glorious saint, an example and an evident proof of the boldness and impudence which ever accompany scandal.

LE PÈRE VINCENT HOUDRY, S.J.



## 92.—On Self-Love.

PÈRES LOUIS DE GRENADA, CAMARET,  
and ST. AUGUSTINE.

“He that loveth his life, shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal.”—JOHN xii. 25.

ORIGINAL sin gave birth to the tyrannical empire of love of self, and it so poisons an ill-regulated mind, that it loves naught else but self, and even ignores God.

St. Thomas says, that this false love is the root of every sin committed from the beginning of the world, and that it is the source and cause of all that is most miserable.

This is very true, since it is sinful self-love alone, that makes us desire all inordinate affections, for the enjoyments here below, and makes us forget God, and the observance of His commandments.

Every kind of misery we see in the world, springs from the root which ripens on this infectious tree.

From this, arises that anxiety which men manifest for their own affairs, and for that negligence of all that appertains to God. From that, comes that delicacy on all points of honour, whilst they think little of God's honour.

It is this, that so interests them in all that is for their worldly advantage, and makes them so indifferent to the service due to God.

No work is deemed too difficult, if it be for their temporal welfare, while for God, they take no pains. The loss of a slight temporal advantage drives them nearly wild ; but they have no thought of losing their immortal souls. The love of pleasure fosters a distaste for all that

is good ; in fine, they labour incessantly for success in this life, and never prepare for the life to come.

LOUIS DE GRENADA.  
*Meditations*, vi.

The difference between self-love and charity, is shown by the movements and workings of each.

1. Self-love showeth that he neglects nothing that may reflect on himself, on the good he has done ; he wishes to be secretly admired, and hears of the praises of others with contempt ; whereas charity praiseth and admireth virtue in others, as something out of the common ; and if it be reflected on himself, he looks upon himself as an object worthy of the vengeance of Heaven.

2. Self-love is violent, impetuous, fantastical, and imperious ; he wishes to command and to be obeyed. In the place of this, charity, according to the Apostle, is mild and meek ; it yields easily to others, and awaits with patience for success, which, if not obtained, blesseth those who persecute him.

3. Self-love is always wrapped up in self. If he go out of the way to do some virtuous action, he does it to draw down praises he may receive, or, at any rate, hopes to receive.

4. Self-love looks after his own interest, does nothing but what may accrue to his advantage ; instead of that, charity does not seek its own, but looks only to God's interest.

5. Self-love is singular ; it wishes for out-of-the-way things, particular devotions ; loves and seeks for distinction ; whereas charity flies from all kinds of singularity, and wishes for nothing particular.

6. Self-love in devotion seeks for sweetness, and when that fails, feels discouraged ; but charity seeks for the will of God alone, and on this will he depends.

We must watch continually over ourselves, and over every movement of the will, to repress a number of selfish frailties, which, on examination, will be found to be as minute as they are continuous.

There are so many petty interests which centre in self, even among those who are pious, that it is incumbent upon us, to be ever on our guard.

There are so many little meannesses which overshadow our best actions, which, if encouraged, will diminish merit, and be the cause of attempting much, but advancing very slowly.

Men, for the most part, flatter themselves that they seek God alone, but they search for Him through the medium of self; and they prefer ease and reputation, and thereby encourage secret pride and self-love.

PÈRE CAMARET.

. . . . .

Two loves, one good, the other bad, one sweet; the other bitter; the two cannot agree, or dwell together in a sinner's heart. It is this, therefore, if any one loves aught but Thee, O Lord, Thy love is not in him.

Doubtless it is a grand and wholesome doctrine how to guard against that self-love which is so capable of being your ruin, and with what hatred you should hate yourself, if you wish to escape from eternal punishment. If you love yourself with an inordinate love, then you should hate yourself indeed; if you cherish a proper hatred of yourself, then you have a proper love of yourself.

Do not then love yourself in this life, lest you lose your soul in the life to come.

ST. AUGUSTINE  
*On John i. 4*

## 93.—On Theatres, Balls, etc.

FÉNELON, ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, and  
LANCTANTIUS.

“He that loveth danger shall perish in it.”—ECCLES. iii. 27.

[FÉNELON, Archbishop of Cambrai, was born of a rich and noble family, at Perigord, on the 6th of August 1651. His uncle, the Marquis of Fénelon, brought him up as his own son, superintended his education, and sent him to the Abbé Trouson, the Superior of Saint Sulpice in Paris. At the age of twenty-four, he took holy orders, and undertook the arduous duties of parish priest of Saint Sulpice. Three years after his ordination, the Archbishop of Paris intrusted him with the direction of the Nouvelles-Catholiques. In 1689, Louis XIV. confided to him the education of his grandchildren, the Dukes of Burgundy, Anjou, and Berri, and rewarded his services by nominating him to the Archbishopric of Cambrai.

It would occupy too long a space to enumerate his many excellent works, to treat of his misunderstanding with Bossuet, to tell of his humble submission to the Holy See, &c., &c. The “Life of Fénelon,” by M. De Bausset, published in 1817, in four vols., is replete with interest. This illustrious prelate died on the 7th of January 1715, aged sixty-three. No one more deplored his loss than did Pope Clement XI., who intended to send him the Cardinal’s cap.]

FÉNELON, in his “Christian Instruction for the Education of Young Ladies,” quotes the opinions of the early Fathers of the Church on this subject. He says—

St. Augustine confesses that the affection he had for shows and theatres, had been the cause of his continued indulgence in sensuality, and that he always came away more unchaste than when he entered, because, he says,

what one sees or what one hears, excites bad thoughts, seduces the mind, and corrupts the heart.

St. Cyprian affirms that theatres are a school of impurity, and a place wherein modesty is prostituted.

Salvian, Bishop of Marseilles, says, that in his time, it was the custom at the Sacrament of Baptism to make an extra-renunciation, namely, a promise to avoid going to theatres.

St. Chrysostom wishes that all would fly from theatres as from a plague.

Tertullian, in his book on "*Spectacles*," shows and proves that the Christian religion has an extreme aversion for all sorts of public amusements, that it abhors them, and it cannot in any way approve of them.

Minutius Felix inveighs against dangerous pastimes in an "Apology" he published in defence of the Christians.

FÉNELON.

Although balls and dancing be recreations, in their own nature, indifferent; yet, according to the ordinary manner in which they are conducted, they preponderate very much on the side of evil, and are, in consequence, extremely dangerous. Being generally carried on in the darkness and obscurity of night, it is by no means surprising that several vicious circumstances should obtain easy admittance, since the subject is of itself so susceptible of evil. The amateurs of these diversions, by sitting up late at night, disable themselves from discharging their duty to God, on the morning of the day following.

Is it not, then, a kind of madness to exchange the day for the night, light for darkness, and good works for criminal fooleries? Every one strives who shall carry most vanity to the ball; and vanity is so congenial to evil affections as well as to dangerous familiarities, that both are easily engendered by dancing.

Balls, dancing, and other nocturnal meetings ordinarily attract the reigning vices and sins together, namely, quarrels, envy, scoffing, and wanton loves, and as these exercises open the pores of the bodies of those that use them, so they also open the pores of their heart, and expose them to the danger of some serpent taking the advantage to breathe loose words or lascivious suggestions into the ear, or of a basilisk casting an impure look or wanton glance of love into the heart, which being thus opened, is easily seized upon and poisoned.

These idle recreations are ordinarily very dangerous; they chase away the spirit of devotion, and leave the soul in a languishing condition; they cool the fervour of charity, and excite a thousand evil affections in the soul, and therefore they are not to be used but with the greatest caution.

But physicians say, that after mushrooms we must drink good wine; and I say, that after dancing it is necessary to refresh our souls with good and holy considerations, to prevent the baneful effects of these dangerous impressions, which the vain pleasure taken in dancing may have left in our minds. But what considerations?

1. Consider, that during the time you were at the ball, innumerable souls were burning in the flames of hell, for the sins they had committed in dancing, or were occasioned by their dances.

2. That, many religious and devout persons, of both sexes, were, at that very time, in the presence of God, singing His praises, and contemplating His beauty. Ah! how much more profitably was their time employed than yours!

3. That, whilst you were dancing, many souls departed out of this world in great anguish, and that thousands of thousands of men and women then suffered great pains in their beds, in hospitals, in the streets, by the gout, the stone, or burning fevers. Alas! they had no rest, and will

you have no compassion for them? And do you not think that you shall one day groan, as they did, whilst others shall dance, as you did?

4. That, our Blessed Saviour, His Virgin Mother, the Angels and Saints, beheld you at the ball. Ah! how greatly did they pity you, seeing your heart pleased with so vain an amusement, and taken up with such childish toys!

5. Alas! whilst you were there, Time was passing away, and Death was approaching nearer: behold how he mocks you, and invites you to his dance, in which the groans of your friends shall serve for the music, and where you shall make but one step from this life to the next. The dance of death is, alas! the true pastime of mortals, since by it we instantly pass from the vain amusements of this world to the eternal pains or pleasures of the next.

I have set you down these little considerations. God will suggest to you many more to the like effect, provided you fear Him.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.  
*Devout Life.*

I know not where you will find more corruption and vice, than in a theatre. Beautiful language causes sin to appear charming, and fine poetry and a pleasing delivery seduce the mind, and leads it as it wills.

LANCTANTIUS.\*

\* This great orator lived in the third century.

## 94.—On Theft, Larceny, etc.

PÈRE LEJEUNE DE L'ORATOIRE.

"Woe to him that heapeth together that which is not his own."

—HABACUC ii. 6.

IT is seldom indeed that larceny and injustice can be separated from avarice; at any rate, the wrong inflicted on one's neighbour is the same. This is what the prophet Osee insinuates, when he says, that theft has spread like the Deluge amongst men.

No need, my brethren, to confine thieves to the woods and forests; they are to be found everywhere; and however infamous this vice may be, there are very many in the world, who, although looked upon as honest, respectable men, are quite as guilty.

It is very true that when we hear, as we often do, of highwaymen and housebreakers breaking into houses, and carrying off all they can, respectable men are not to be found in their company; but when it has been shown that there are many kinds of larceny which the world does not consider as shameful, nay, even some are looked upon as honourable, you must then be convinced that the prophet is right, when he says, that "Theft is spread amongst men like a deluge."

If it is absolutely impossible, that those who have acquired riches through defrauding another of his property, can be saved without making restitution, when they have the power to do so, it is also, on the other hand, almost impossible that they could do so, if they are possessed with a vicious self-interested passion.



One may say that this kind of impossibility is to be found in the moral actions of men, where there are so many difficulties which hinder them from putting them into execution, where there are so many obstacles to overcome, and where miracles of graces are needed to induce us to make extraordinary efforts.

Experience has shown us, that the restitution of stolen property should be placed in the ranks of impossibilities of this kind, since out of the incalculable number of persons who have been unjust enough to defraud, very few indeed have been found, who have been just and honourable enough to restore it. Almost all the restitutions that are made, consist of some crowns which a servant may have stolen from his master ; but, for those thieves who retain large sums of others' property, those money-lenders, whose riches consist of accumulations of usurious interest, those masters of chicanery, who have cunningly obtained through favour, friends, or court influence, property which was not theirs ; to gentry, such as these, it would be useless to speak of restitution ; it would be a recommendation to which they would not willingly listen.

That shows, that there is a species of secret impossibility in an act of justice which, in practice, we find so rare.

It is not, say you, our intention to die holding the property of another person ; it is our intention to return it through our will, but not now. What if you die without making your last will, what will happen then ? And if your will is not properly drawn up or not properly attested, your heirs may easily upset the will, or fail to carry out your intentions ; what will become of you then ? And even if all this should not occur, do you not see that by deferring to make restitution, which you could now do, you render it most difficult, since you would be compelled not only to pay the principal, but it would be incumbent on you to make some satisfaction for the injury caused by your delay.

You cannot keep for long those ill-gotten goods; they will be the cause of an unhappiness which will last for ever. Notwithstanding you hold it now, you must, when you die, leave that money which you cannot now give up, and you will then be compelled to do necessarily and fruitlessly, what you could now do, willingly and meritoriously. Ah! would it not be much better to make a willing restitution now, than to make it at the hour of death, when, perchance, you may do it with regret, through constraint, and without reward? Would it not be better, says St. Bernard, to despise those benefits with honour and with an interior conscientious satisfaction, than to lose them and part with them all with a great but useless grief? Would it not be far more prudent to give them up willingly for the love of Christ, than to leave them behind you, whether you like it or not?

I tell you now, beseechingly, since it is for the salvation of your soul, *Redde quod debes*—Return what thou owest. Ah! have some compassion on yourself; restore to that tradesman, to that workman, that servant what you owe them, make some reparation to that poor widow whose pittance you have kept back, repair the injury you have inflicted on that poor family by the sale of worthless shares; in a word, give up property which does not belong to you. *Redde quod debes*—Pay what you owe.

I say this now, beseechingly, but recollect that Death will one day sternly say, “Depart, wretched man; leave a house which is not legitimately yours; leave behind thee monies which you cannot carry away with you.”

LE PÈRE LEJEUNE DE L'ORATOIRE.  
*Sur le Larcin.*

## 95.—On Vainglory.

SS. CHRYSOSTOM, AMBROSE, and  
ALPHONSE RODRIGUEZ, S.J.

“Let us not be made desirous of vainglory, provoking one another.”

—GALATIANS V. 26.

THE yearning after glory is a strange passion. It displays itself in a hundred different ways. Some wish to be honoured, some wish to be in regal power, some aspire to be rich, and others sigh to be strong and robust.

This tyrannic passion, passing still further on, induces some to seek for glory by their alms-deeds, others by their fasts and mortifications, some by their ostentatious prayers, others by their learning and science; so various are the forms of this monster vice.

One need not be astonished that men seek after the emoluments and grandeur of this world, but what is more astonishing (and what more blamable), that any one can be found who is proud and vain of his good works, of his fasts, his prayers, and of his alms. I confess that I am pierced to the heart when I see such holy actions tarnished by secret vanity. I feel as much grieved as I should be if I heard of an illustrious princess, of whom much was expected, giving herself up to all sorts of debauchery and vice.

Men soon find that there is no one more importunate than he who, filled with vainglory, praises himself, gives himself airs, and places on his head a wreath of incense. He is laughed at for his vanity, and the more they notice

that he boasts of himself, the more they endeavour to humiliate him.

In fact, the more you try to attract the praise of the world by your own vanity and vainglory, the more will people either avoid you or laugh at you.

Thus it happens that the result is contrary to our expectations; we are anxious that the world should praise us, and exclaim, "What a good man! how charitable he is!" But people will say, "What a vain man! how easy to see that he wishes to please men, rather than please God!"

If, on the other hand, you hide the good you do, it is then that God will praise you; He even will not allow any holy action to remain long concealed. You may try to suppress the performance of good deeds, He will take care to make them known, aye, better known than you could possibly have intended.

You see, then, that there is nothing more antagonistic to glory and honour, when you seek to do good merely for the purpose of being seen, known, and admired.

It is the way of doing quite the contrary to what you intended, since, instead of showing off your goodness, you will only cause your vanity to be known to all men, and punished by Almighty God.

This vice seems, as it were, to smother all our reasoning faculties, so much so, that one would say, that he who is a slave to vainglory had lost his senses.

You would look upon that man as a madman who, being short of stature, would really believe that he was growing so tall, that he would soon be able to look down on the highest mountain. After this extravagance, you would need no further proof of his insanity.

So in like manner, when you see a man who considers himself to be above all his fellow-creatures, and would be offended were he compelled to mix with the common herd of men, you would seek for no other proof of his madness.

He is even more ridiculous than those who have lost the use of reason, for he voluntarily reduces himself to that pitiable state of extravagant folly.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.  
*Fifty-eight on St. Matthew.*

. . . . .

Public approbation has but little effect on a man who has acted from good and conscientious motives; such a man merits as much again as he seems to have disregarded before.

Those who seek with too much eagerness for the esteem and applause of the world, receive during this life the reward of their good works, but merit nothing for eternity. This is a maxim drawn from Holy Scripture.

I, however, tell you, that all those alms that are given to create a sensation are not meritorious; that those who, with a flourish of trumpets, proclaim to the world the good they have done, have already received their reward; and even those who make a parade of their fasts and mortifications lose all the merit by vain ostentation.

Our Saviour teaches us to do good by stealth. It is God, not men, we ought to study to please. The reward which men can give us is frivolous and transient, but God reserves for us an infinite reward, an eternal recompense.

ST. AMBROSE.  
*Offic. I.*

. . . . .

All the saints admonish us to be on our guard against vainglory, because, say they, it is a cunning thief, which often steals from us our best actions, and which insinuates itself so secretly, that it has struck its blow even before we have perceived it. St. Gregory says that vainglory is like a robber, who first craftily insinuates himself into the company of a traveller, pretending to go the same way as

he does, and afterwards robs and kills him when he is least upon his guard, and when he thinks himself most secure. "I confess," says the saint in the last chapter of his *Morals*, "that when I go about to examine my own intention, even while I am writing this, I think that I have no other will than to please God; but, notwithstanding, while I am not upon my guard, I find that a certain desire of pleasing men intermixes itself, and methinks I feel some vain satisfaction for having performed it well. How it comes to pass I know not, but I perceive that, while I go on, what I do is not so free from dust and chaff as it was in the beginning. For I know that I began it at first, with the sole view of pleasing God; but now I perceive other considerations mixing themselves, which render my intention less upright and pure than it was."

. . . . .

What sufficiently demonstrates the deformity of the vice is, that the saints and divines rank it amongst those sins ordinarily called mortal, or which are more properly styled capital sins; because they are, as it were, the head and source of all others. Some reckon eight of this nature, and say that the first is anger, and the second vainglory; but the common opinion of saints, and that which is received by the Church, is, that there are seven capital sins.

ALPHONSE RODRIGUEZ, S.J.  
*See next "Half Hour," No. 96.*

## 96.—On our Bad Passions.

PÈRES RODRIGUEZ, NEPVUE, and  
ST. PHILIP NERI.

“For this cause God delivered them up to shameful affections.”

—ROMANS i. 26.

[ALPHONSE RODRIGUEZ, the Jesuit Father, was born at Valladolid in 1526. For some years he was Professor of Moral Theology, and was afterwards Rector of Monte Key, in Galicia. With this office, he united that of Master of Novices, among whom he had the honour of instructing the learned Suarez. He died in the odour of sanctity, at Seville on the 21st of February 1616, at the great age of ninety. This pious Jesuit Father is chiefly known as the author of “Practice of Christian Perfection,” a work which should be read over and over again by every Catholic. An excellent edition of this work, for the laity, is published in two volumes by Burns, Oates, & Co.

We must not confound this father with the Blessed Alphonse Rodriguez, a lay brother, who died at Majorca, October 31, 1617, and whose beatification was decreed by Clement XIII. and Leo XII.]

PAGAN philosophers all agree that wisdom consists in a tranquillity of the soul, which it enjoys when the sensual appetites are entirely subdued. It is then that, there being no violent passions to trouble the peace of the soul by inordinate desires, or by darkening the understanding, which is sure to be the case when they are in agitation; for the peculiar property of passion is, to blind the reason and diminish within us the liberty of our own free will.

But when the passions are lulled, the understanding has purer lights to know what is right, and the will has freer liberty to embrace what is correct and good.

Now, this peace and quietude God wishes to find in our heart, in order that He may dwell therein, and wills to infuse wisdom within us, and to bestow His graces upon us. The mortification of our passions and the control of our appetites are the only means of obtaining that peace and of securing that tranquillity.

One can obtain peace only by going to war; if you do not wish to battle with your passions, to curb your inordinate desires, to gain a victory over self, you will never obtain that peace, and you will never be master of yourself if you are not the conqueror.

It must be reckoned as a certain truth that the intemperateness of our appetites and the perverse inclinations of our flesh are the greatest obstacles we have, not only to our salvation, but, still more, to our progress in virtue.

What has often been said is, that the flesh is our greatest enemy, because, in fact, from that spring all our bad passions, all our disorders and our falls. "From whence are wars and contentions among you?" says the Apostle James: "are they not hence from your concupiscences which war in your members?"

Sensuality, concupiscence, and the unruliness of self-love are the cause of all our wars in our members, of all the sins, of all the imperfections we commit, and consequently are the greatest hindrance we meet with in our way of perfection and salvation.

From whence it is easy to see, that real mortification consists in repairing the disorder of our passions, that is to say, by overcoming the evil propensities of our passions and the obstinacy of our self-love.

A. RODRIGUEZ, S.J.  
*On Mortification.*

One can safely say that there is no virtue more recom-



mended by Jesus Christ than the mortification of our passions.

A large portion of the Gospels tends to make us understand its necessity, and there is no truth more often repeated, more often expressed. You read therein of the cross, of sufferings, of death, of denying yourself, of hatred of self, of the violence we must use, of the narrow way whereon we must necessarily enter.

At one time, our Saviour tells us that he who wishes to come after Me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me; at another time, He assures us that since the preaching of St. John the Baptist, that is to say, since the promulgation of the new law, the kingdom of heaven is only taken by violence, and that only those who use violence can gain it; at another time He tells us that the road which leads to life is narrow, and there are few who enter on it, and it is on that account, He exhorts us to enter thereon.

Now, what does our Lord wish to infer from this necessity of carrying one's cross, of denying one's self, of entering into the narrow path, of doing violence? He points out the obligation we all have of repressing the bent of our natural inclinations, which, coming from a corrupt source, are always unruly, and of continually fighting against our passions, especially those which are the most dangerous, because they all usually lead to evil consequences.

If mortification is a remedy for past sins, it is a preservative against evils to come. We have, as children of Adam, received with our inherited original sin, a strong repugnance to do good, a violent inclination to do that which is wrong; we cannot get rid of this inclination. Can we give in to this repugnance without falling into disorder? neither can we safely resist without using violence, without incessantly battling with our bad passions,

and is not this the chief exercise of Christian mortification?

We are all born proud, ambitious, choleric, vindictive, self-interested, sensual—this we are naturally—you see then that we must cease to be wicked if we wish to be Christians, if we are anxious to work out our salvation.

To effect this must we not always watch over ourselves, must we not ever be engaged in a spiritual combat, and, consequently, must we not practise continual mortification?

LE PÈRE NEPVUE.  
*Esprit du Christianisme.*

. . . . .

To mortify one passion, no matter how small, is a greater help in the spiritual life, than many abstinences, fasts, and disciplines.

ST. PHILIP NERI.

## 97.—On Alms-Deeds.

PÈRE HOUDRY, ST. CHRYSOSTOM,  
and FATHER FABER.

“According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little.”—TOBIAS iv. 8.

OF the great advantage to be derived from almsgiving, and of the love which we ought to feel in bestowing, with liberality, every kind of help to the poor, there is nothing more impressive than the Gospel of St. Matthew, where the Apostle relates, what our Saviour will say, and do, on the last great day—the day of judgment.

The elect are ranged on the right, and the reprobate on the left. Jesus fixing His eyes on the wicked on the left, will pronounce those terrible words: “Go! ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” And to justify this frightful sentence, He will add: “I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and you had no wish to receive Me; I was naked, and you clothed Me not; I was sick, and you did not pay Me a single visit. Go! ye accursed, depart from Me.”

Listen and tremble, you, who, far from protecting the widow and orphan, have unjustly oppressed them. You, who are enriched with the spoils of the unfortunate; you, who have heard without being moved, their complaints and their groans; you, who have even insulted their poverty; you, who, by taking advantage of a bad season, have rendered the poor more miserable, by assisting in keeping

up or by raising the price of necessities, or by usurious interest, have drained their little savings; you, in fine, who have designedly shut up your bowels of compassion,—come and hear the Supreme Judge pronounce the sentence of your condemnation. *Discedite, maledicti*—Withdraw from me, ye accursed. And where are they to go, Lord? *In ignem æternum*—Into eternal fire. Why?

Because, says the Lord, I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat—*Esurivi enim et non dedisti mihi manducare*. I was ill, and in prison, and you have not visited Me!—*Infirmus et in carcere, et non visitastis me*. I have suffered extreme want, in the persons of My poor, which you ought to have looked upon as My members, and you have not seen to this. It is thus that the Lord of Justice, on the day of wrath, in the presence of the whole world, will compel the merciless rich, to seal their own condemnation.

Can one, after that, question the obligation of this precept, since the Supreme Judge seems to forget the other breaches of His laws, to condemn the sinner on this precept alone?

R. P. VINCENT HOUDRY, S.J.

. . . . .

St. Chrysostom, in his Homily on this subject, says, that God when He deigned to become Incarnate, was so united to poverty, with such an inexpressible union, that the poor is a tabernacle where God is hidden, in the same way as He is veiled in our ciboriums. So that it is the poor who beg, but it is God who receives the alms; God is our debtor, and it is the Almighty who wishes to repay us. By this means, although He is invisible, He is still with us in the person of His poor. He receives the alms, and in return, He loads us with His graces and blessings.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

I cannot bring myself to believe that a professedly pious person, who is very guarded in giving alms, has the genuine spirit of inward repentance. Now, in the present day, it is not uncommon to see pious people acting as if they really thought their piety in other respects was almost a dispensation from almsgiving. Others, again, when they give, give in ways which minister to their own humours; so that even in almsgiving, self-love shall find its account.

Moreover, generosity is not almsgiving. The quantity given, must have reference to the means of the giver, but more to the amount of sacrifice and self-denial, which his alms entail upon him. Expensiveness is perhaps not a distinct sin in itself, though even that may be questioned; but it is the mother of many sins, and it is remarkably uncongenial to the spiritual life. Yet pious people are particularly given to be expensive, when they have the means.

An alms, which does not put the giver to inconvenience, is rather a kindness than an alms; and certainly the alms, which is to be a satisfactory evidence of inward repentance, ought to reach the point of causing some palpable inconvenience, of involving some solid self-denial.

FATHER FABER (Orat.)  
*Spiritual Conferences.*

## 98.—On Keeping the Commandments.

PÈRE LAMBERT.

"My son, keep my commandments, and thou shalt live ; and my law as the apple of thy eye."—PROVERBS vii. 1.

THE word Decalogue signifies a law which comprises ten commandments, the purely excellent, the most just and the most conformable to the law of equity that could be given to the world, whether we consider the author, who is God Himself ; whether we look to their end, since they have for their aim, not a decaying or perishable benefit, but an eternity of happiness ; whether, in fine, we consider the things they contain, since therein, there is no virtue which they do not command, no vice they do not forbid.

St. Augustine says, the Decalogue is an abridgment of every law (*Quæst. 401, sup. Exodus*). St. Augustine also says, that in the New Law the commandments are less numerous, more easy, and more beneficial.

The law of God, does it appear to us to be difficult ? It is because we have so little love. The law of God, in all that it embraces, is sweet to him whose heart is full of charity. Love, says St. John, consists in keeping His commandments, and His commandments are not painful.

They are not painful when love induces us to keep them. If they should appear to be painful or laborious, it is that your heart is full of the love of the world, full of self-love, and destitute of the love of God. St. Augustine makes our Saviour speak, and puts into His mouth the following words and complaints: Avarice commands the hardest tasks ; see what I command, and make the comparis-

Avarice induces men to cross the seas, to go into unknown, undiscovered countries, and a thousand perils are eagerly sought. Avarice is obeyed, all My commandments are set at nought. Is it not shameful that the world should have more authority than God? that they should plead difficulty when it is God who speaks, that they should daily surmount the most difficult obstacles, when it is a question of pleasing, or of getting on in the world?

It is a general principle, in all that God enjoins, that He asks and seeks first above all—our hearts. Does not God command us to give alms? He wishes, however, that we should do these acts of charity from a pure motive, that is to say, from the heart; and He Himself says, that He loves the cheerful giver. God asks us for good works, exterior homage, proofs of our entire dependence on Him as His creatures. He gives us to understand that if these good works do not proceed from the heart, He will reject such gifts, and class us with those hypocrites who honour Him with their lips, whilst their hearts are far from Him.

Those, then, are displeasing to God, who in their heart disown actions, which they consider they are obliged to perform through a natural human benevolence, or through a love of display. Those, again, do not obey the commandments as they ought, who indulge in murmuring, grumbling, and in seeking for excuses.

It was the fault of the Jews that so often caused God to be angry with them, for their mistrusts and murmurs.

I hear the Lord complain so touchingly, "How long will this impious and ungrateful people murmur against me? (*Numbers x.*) And you know how this people had been punished, and, with what severity God chastised them.

LAMBERT.

*Ecclesiastical Discourses.*

## 99.—On Conscience.

BOURDALOUE.

"Our glory is here, the testimony of our conscience."

—2 CORINTHIANS i. 12.

AT the very moment we commit a sin, we feel within a remorse of conscience, and this is the reproach for the sin committed. Now, I say that this remorse is a grace; for what is a grace? How many are ignorant of it, or rather how many ignore it, although it is received every day? Grace, say the theologians, is a help which God gives to man, in order that he may act upon it, and so merit heaven; and if he be a sinner, in order that he may work out his salvation by penance.

Now all this perfectly tallies with that *synderesis*, that is to say, to that remorse of conscience, which grows within us after sin. For it is certain that God is the author of it, that it is solely through love that He excites it in us, and that He uses it as a means of working out our conversion.

Whence comes the conclusion, that this remorse has all the qualities of a genuine grace? for there is nothing more certain than that God is the source from whence it arises, since the Scripture declares the same thing to us in a thousand places. Yes, it is I, says the Almighty speaking to a sinner, it is I who will reproach you for the enormity of your sin. When, after committing it, your conscience disturbs you, attribute your disquiet to Me, and do not seek elsewhere from whence comes this remorse. A hun-



dred times, after having yielded to temptation, you would try to conceal from yourself your cowardice; you would wish to turn away your eyes, so as not to see your sin; and you fancy that I shall do the same and fall in with your notions; but you deceive yourself: "Thou thoughtest unjustly, that I was as thyself" (*Ps. xlix.*); for being your Lord and your God, I will always be your accuser, and as often as you shall commit an offence against Me, I will, whether you will or not, lay before you your iniquity and the horror I have of sin. "I will reprove thee, and set them before thy face" (*Ps. xlix.*)

You see, Christians, how that God is the principal author of remorse of conscience. But what motive has He for this? I have said that it is through love, through a miracle of His goodness, an effusion of His mercy.

Does He not explain Himself to the same purpose to His beloved disciple in the Revelation? *Ego, quod amo, arguo.* Those whom I love, I rebuke and chastise (*Apocalypse, 35*); and it is by chastising them that I show my love for them. But what occasion for other testimony than the word of our Saviour, when He announced to His apostles the coming of the Holy Ghost: "When He shall come, He will reprove the world of sin" (*John xvi.*) And by whom will it be reproved? By the Spirit of truth, which I shall send for that purpose. And what does He mean by the Spirit of truth? The substantial love of the Father and the Son, the Divine Person, who is charity itself. Observe, then, dear brethren, that it is the love of God which reproves when we are sinners: "He will reprove the world of sin." And now, is there the least room to doubt that the remorse of our conscience is not a grace?

It is not an external, but an internal grace, as it is in the very bottom of our souls, that this gnawing worm of remorse is found. Wherefore the Apostle of the Gentiles

tells us, that God "hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out" (*Galatians* iv.) This Divine Spirit (as St. Augustine observes) cries out, not after the manner of a preacher, who speaks to us and reproaches us with the viciousness of our life: for not all the preachers in the world, have it in their power to probe the conscience; and, however their words may strike the ear, they are far from reaching the human heart. But the Spirit of God, the better to be heard by us, holds, as I may say, His place in the centre of us; and from thence (says St. Augustine) He incessantly cries out, in opposition to our passions, censures our pleasures, and condemns our sins. Ah! Christians, can we carry our ingratitude to that pitch, as to think the contradiction of the Holy Spirit an importunate rigour, and not confess that it is a gift of His grace, a mercy on the sinner, a help of salvation, and a favourable means of bringing him back to God? Can we be so blind, as to suppose the sting which pains us, an insupportable pain, and wish to be rid of it?

No, my Lord, we will never entertain such dangerous notions; and as we are assured that it is Your Spirit, the Divine Comforter, which infuses these salutary remorse within us, we will always receive them as benefactions from Thy hand, and, far from complaining, will only think of giving fresh proofs of our love and gratitude, by our fidelity.

BOURDALOUE.  
*From his Sermons.*

. . . . .  
When God will be your judge, He will require no better witness, than your own conscience.

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*On Psalm xxxvii.*

## 100.—On the Conversion of Sinners.

BOURDALOUE and PÈRE HOUDRY.

“If you seek the Lord your God you will find Him, provided always, you seek with all your heart, and in the bitter tribulation of your soul.”—DEUTERONOMY iv. 29.

IT is an error to maintain that the tears our Lord shed, dispense us from shedding our own, for tears are indispensably necessary, principally those, which St. Augustine calls the tears of the heart, since it is by these, is commenced our spiritual conversion.

The conversion of Magdalen began with tears: *Cæpit rigare pedes ejus*. She wept more for herself, than she did for her brother Lazarus.

It was through contrition, that David expiated his sins, for he wept night and day, and watered his couch with his tears. It was by that, St. Peter blotted out his crime, for it is written, that he went out, and wept bitterly.

When one begs pardon for a fault, we may fail of convincing others of our sincerity, for words are not always the true interpreters of the heart; but with respect to tears, they have less cunning, and are far more eloquent, because they disclose the soul's deepest sorrow: *Lacryma totum prodit affectum*.

It is in this that consists true penance, an index of an abiding sorrow for having offended God, which then prompts us to do our utmost to satisfy His justice.

For it is of little worth to acknowledge our sins (the wicked, the hypocrite, often see their crimes, but are not sufficiently aware of their enormity), but we must also feel

an inward grief, a salutary compunction of heart, and that bitterness of soul which the Apostle calls, sadness unto God. From these arise our sighs, our wish to cover our head with ashes, our dejected look, that make one strike the breast, that suggest the discipline and hair-shirt; that sorrow, from which proceed deep regrets for the past, fear for the future, and anguish for the present; that sadness, which complains like the dove, and which make tears supply the place of food, according to the expression of David.

Infallible are the marks of repentance, when the feelings are so acute that it pierces the wounded conscience; not only does it rend our hearts within, but outwardly, it escapes in sighs and tears.

Thus the royal prophet tells us, that he bedewed his bed with his tears; thus also, the sinner in the Gospel washed the feet of Jesus, and mingled with the ointment the tears of a breaking heart.

See how efficacious is the remedy of such happy tears, so different from our ordinary worldly weepings.

In vain you weep, when you are overwhelmed with debt, and when you are pressed hard by creditors. In vain you weep, when you are lying on a bed of sickness, racked, perchance, with pains. In vain you weep, for a dear one dead. Rivers of tears will not blot out such griefs.

But oh! marvellous virtue of the tears of penance! they cancel debt, they cure your sickness, they restore you to life. And provided that you weep from the heart, behold you will be transformed into new creatures, and you will begin to lead a life of heavenly spirituality.

BOURDALOUE.

. . . . .

Scripture speaks of a converted man as a new man, because, in fact, it produces a wonderful renewal in a regenerated creature. He is no longer himself, he is

another man, another being, everything is changed. He cannot recognise the past; on whatever side you look, you find a new man. He has other eyes, eyes so full of renewed faith, that they penetrate unto heaven; they now perceive the celestial light of truth, and the beauty of holiness and sanctity, and fathom the unseen and distant future. He has other ears, ears attentive and obedient, that take pleasure in hearing the Word of God, and they listen to the oracles of heaven.

He has another taste, by which he relishes spiritual delights; he has far better feelings than he had before. He has a horror of sin, and a fear of offending God; his anger, is zeal for the glory of God; his joy, is the peace of his conscience; his love, a love for God and his neighbour; his hatred, his former love of self; his hope, the search for heavenly things; his occupations are in good works; his recreation the praises of God; his life a continual practice of piety. You would say that his nature was totally altered and changed.

This change of grace is not the work of a single day. When the strong arm of grace takes possession of a heart, it progresses with difficulty; a house built on a rock, does not overturn with the first gust of wind; the devil, in quiet possession of a soul, does not yield to the first effort to drive him away.

In the same way, grace of conversion is not suddenly established in a heart; its progress is slow, almost imperceptible; it is only by degrees that the work is perfected. We must first fight against our dominant passions, the dire enemies of our salvation.

REV. PÈRE VINCENT HOUDRY.

## 101.—On the Employment of Time.

FATHERS SEGNERI and CROISSET.

“Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men.”

—EPHESIANS vi. 13.

GOD allows us ample time to do good: “I gave her a time that she might do penance” (*Apoc.* ii.) But when this time, of which we are now the masters, shall be ended, we can no longer have a single moment at our disposal: “Time shall be no longer” (*Apoc.* x.) It is then that our Lord’s time will have arrived, that time which He has fixed, and then He will ask how we have employed that which He had given. Ah! what a severe account will He not demand! *Vocavit adversum me tempus* (*Thren.* iii.)

Let us examine ourselves and see how we employ our time. Is it employed in useful things, or is it frittered away, in seeking after vain pursuits?

God gives us this time, in order that it may assist us in working out our own salvation, and we lose it, or rather, we make use of it in such a manner as will eventually lead to eternal loss. Oh! what a use to make of a blessing, which ought to be fostered with so much care, and so much wisdom.

We shall know the value of time, when we shall have allowed it to pass away, and when our Lord’s time will have arrived; and that time is not far off: “Her time is near at hand, and her days shall not be prolonged,” says *Isaias* (xiv.)

The wise man is not satisfied with comparing the days of our life to those of a traveller, in order to express its short duration; he says, further on, that this short time passes away so quickly, that he can but compare it to a shadow: *Velut umbra præterit*.

How likely we are to lose it, and what dangers do we not incur, if we do not take especial care to make a good use of that which God has given us.

A traveller pressed for time, thinks only, of how soon he can complete his labours; he deprives himself of sleep, of his meals, his relaxations, in fact, all that he can shorten or cut off; if we do not make a profitable use of the little time that remains to work out our salvation, what do we not risk?

The loss of your time does not produce a less evil than the eternal loss of your soul.

What, then, is the blindness of worldlings, who pass their days in boasting projects of fame and fortune? A traveller, whom the love of his own dear country urges his return, does he amuse himself on the road with trifles? What are the largest fortunes in the world, or the grandest establishments on earth, in comparison to a happy eternity, to which every Christian should aspire? Nothing but trifles and mere playthings.

My days, alas! are reckoned up, and the number is but very small. I will husband these my days with care, so that I may reach at last the heavenly home.

LE PÈRE PAUL SEGNERI, S.J.  
*Meditations.*

God gives me this day to work out my salvation. Ought we not to meditate on this, for are we certain of seeing to-morrow? To-day, well employed, may be worth an eternity of happiness and glory. If God had vouchsafed to have given the same grace to those who have finished their

eer; if a soul could come out of hell, or purgatory, even one day, with the power of expiating its sins by penance and prayer, what would it not do? In so short, so precious a time, would a single moment be lost? Doubtless, no! Even those who are in heaven, would they not deem it an inestimable favour, if they had another day to merit a new degree of holiness which would unite them more closely to God?

Why should we not make use of this short time in a similar way?

Let us apply to ourselves what the wise man says in Ecclesiasticus (xiv.): "Defraud not thyself of the good; and let not the part of a good gift overpass thee." Be mindful and do not let slip any opportunity of doing good: we can then listen to, and follow faithfully, the voice of the inspirations of God.

Let us do our utmost to carry out the advice of the wise man, and in the most excellent and perfect way: "He hath made all things good in their time."

Let us also follow that other advice of Ecclesiastes, namely,—Do without delay all that is in your power, lest ye be in hell (which is full of souls who have made bad use of time), there will be no time to do good, neither will there be knowledge nor wisdom to teach us.

Our life is made up of a number of years, which quickly succeed each other; they pass away without a hope of our ever seeing another day, or another hour ever return.

This series of years, of months, of days, which God has given us for the purpose of saving our souls, are properly a talent which the Almighty has been pleased to entrust to us. This we ought to make much of, as we shall necessarily have to give a strict account. Since we have been in the world, no year has passed, but that it has been the last year for very many, and the year now silently gliding away, will terminate the career of many more.



How sad for those who have lost, perhaps, every day of the year!

Have we nothing to reproach ourselves with? How have we employed each day? We have worked hard for the world, have we gained much for heaven? For if we have done nothing for eternity, we have lost a year.

Now, at least, let us usefully make use of the little time that remains

LE PÈRE CROISSET.  
*Exercises de Piété.*

. . . . .

The three following paragraphs are from the "Maxims and Sayings" of Saint Philip Neri:—

We must not be behind time in doing good, for death will not be behind *his* time.

Happy is the youth, because he has time before him, to do good.

In order to begin well, and to finish better, it is quite necessary to hear Mass every day, unless there be some lawful hindrance in the way.

And St. Bonaventura tells us, that there is no greater loss, than the loss of time..

## 102.—On Faith.

FLECHIER and PÈRE LA FONT.

“Lord ! I believe ; help my unbelief.”—MARK ix. 23.

INQUISITIVE speculation destroys that simplicity which seeks only to bend to authority, and submit the reason and will to the weight of the Divine Word, without wishing to penetrate the depth of the mysteries, and entering into vain and useless arguments.

This simplicity is founded on the respect due to God, and on the deference we ought to pay to His Word.

The mind ought to be as submissive to all that our Saviour has said, as the will should be amenable to all that He commands; and as it is our duty to curb our natural inclinations to obey the laws of God, so we must control our feelings and repugnances, to acquiesce in His truths.

It is not that faith has not reason and prudence, or that it elevates itself above reason, but as St. Bernard remarks, it is not amenable to reason, inasmuch, as it is founded on the truth of the doctrine, which it has received. I did not rest my faith on the penetration of my own intellect, but on the authority of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. The truth which I do not fathom, is enveloped in its origin.

Far from seeking faith out of God by the puny efforts of my reason, I adore it in the bosom of God, where it has its existence, invisible though it may be, and hidden from the eyes of men.

We often hear worldly people say, “Let me but witness but one miracle, and I will be converted.” They deceive themselves. Their wonder would be excited, but it would

leave no impression on their hearts. They would admire the power of the Almighty, but they would not increase in love and charity. They might be convinced, but they would not be converted, and since neither the authority of Holy Writ, nor the interior voice of conscience, nor the preaching of the gospel, nor the inspirations of heaven, do not induce them to believe, the light impression of a miracle would be very soon effaced.

It would require to be renewed in their every action; and the desire of witnessing one, is only a pretext, or an excuse, for their unbelief, and not as a remedy, or an assistance, they desire for perfecting their faith.

Faith is that column of vapour, of which Scripture speaks, which obscures the daylight and enlightens the night. It is that holy mixture of darkness and light, of infallible truths, and less evident proofs. It is that enigma mentioned by St. Paul, which is seen through a glass darkly.

It is, in fine, that truth, which, being revealed, causes the joy and happiness of the blessed, and which, even when veiled, is the hope and comfort of the saints on earth.

It is for this reason, that Jesus Christ chided one of His apostles, "To believe, you have seen and touched Me." You are indebted to your eyes and hands, when you ought to have trusted to My word. You have acquiesced in a visible and palpable truth. It is out of curiosity, not devotion.

Rejoice in the grace which I have been willing to confer upon you ; but transfer the reward to those who have believed what they have not seen, and who, paying deference to the power of My word, notwithstanding the contradiction of reason and sense, make a public avowal of a truth, which is not certainly unknown, but which is nevertheless incomprehensible.

FLÉCHIER.

*Panegyrique sur St. Thomas.*

It is far from my intention to quote all the magnificent eulogies which the Fathers of the Church have written on faith, in order to point out the beauties and force of their language. I do not pause to show you that it is, according to the great Apostle, as it were the spiritual foundation of every virtue, and that it is through faith, that man begins to draw nearer to God.

I need not tell you with St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, that it is a purely gratuitous gift of God, preceded by no merit, but from which proceed all merits, and that it is the source and beginning of the righteousness of men: *origo justitiæ, sanctitatis caput, unde omnis justitia sumitur initium.*

I will not tell you, with St. Bernardine of Sienna, that it is the most excellent homage that man can render to God, by subjecting his reason, which is the most ungovernable and the proudest of all his faculties, by a blind deference to all the truths He has revealed, however incomprehensible they may be.

I will not stop to show you that it is to faith, that all those good and grand men, of whom St. Paul sings the praises, are indebted for so many victories over tyrants and evils, and by which they have overcome all laws of nature, and subjected entire cities to the empire of Jesus Christ.

In fine, I do not wish to delay pointing out to you that faith elevates us to a high and sublime knowledge of the grandeur and perfection of the Divine Creator, a faith which is impenetrable to the light of reason, which far surpasses the intelligence of angels, and which has this advantage, in common with the light of glory, that it looks upon God as He is, and that it reflects His fulness and magnificence; first in that veiled obscurity which is our comfort here on earth, and which will be revealed to us hereafter, all its plenitude and splendour, as it has been revealed to all the saints in heaven.

PÈRE LA FONT.

*Entretiens.*

## 103.—On Friendship.

SS. FRANCIS DE SALES, CHRYSOSTOM,  
and JEROME.

“Blessed is he that findeth a true friend.”

—PROVERBS XXV. 12.

FRIENDSHIP requires great communication between friends, otherwise it can neither grow nor subsist. Wherefore it often happens, that with this communication of friendship, divers other communications insensibly glide from one heart to another, by a mutual infusion and reciprocal intercourse of affections, inclinations, and impressions.

But this happens especially when we have a high esteem for him whom we love; for when we open our heart in such manner to his friendship, that with it his inclinations and impressions enter rapidly in their full stream, be they good or bad. Certainly the bees, that gather the honey of Heraclea, seek nothing but honey; but yet, with the honey they insensibly suck the poisonous qualities of the aconite, from which they gather it.

Good God, Philothea, on these occasions we must carefully put, what the Saviour of our souls was accustomed to say, in practice: Be ye good bankers or changers of money; that is to say, receive not bad money with the good, nor base gold with the fine; separate that which is precious from that which is vile, for there is scarcely any person that has not some imperfection. For why should we receive promiscuously the spots and imperfections of a friend, together with his friendship? We must love him indeed,

withstanding his imperfections, but we must neither  
 ve nor receive his imperfections ; for friendship requires  
 communication of good, not of evil.

True and living friendship cannot subsist in the midst  
 sins. As the salamander extinguishes the fire in which  
 lies, so sin destroys the friendship in which it lodges.  
 it be but a transient sin, friendship will presently put  
 to flight by correction ; but if it be habitual, and take  
 its lodging, friendship immediately perishes, for it  
 not subsist but on the solid foundation of virtue. We  
 st never, then, commit sin for friendship's sake.

A friend becomes an enemy when he would lead us  
 sin, and he deserves to lose his friend, when he would  
 troy his soul.

It is an infallible mark of false friendship, to see it exer-  
 ed towards a vicious person, be his sins of whatsoever  
 d ; for if he whom we love be vicious, without doubt  
 friendship is also vicious, since, seeing it cannot regard  
 e virtue, it must needs be grounded on some frivolous  
 ue or sensual quality. Society, formed for traffic among  
 chants, is but a shadow of true friendship, since it is  
 made for the love of the persons, but for the love of  
 1. Finally, the two following divine sentences are two  
 n pillars to secure a Christian life. The one is that  
 he wise man : He that feareth God, shall likewise have  
 ue friendship. The other is that of the apostle St.  
 es : The friendship of this world, is the enemy of God.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

*Devout Life.*

we consider the friendships of the ordinary run of  
 tals nowadays, we should find that nearly all human  
 idships are at a low ebb, and are simply kept up by

the prospect of gain in the businesses of this life. If you wish to test this, you have only to examine into the different causes which bring on disunion in families, and which make you enemies of each other. The reason is, that when friendships are only founded on worldly and fleeting advantages, they cannot be true and lasting friendships; they vanish at the least slight, interest, or jealousy, because they are not attached to the soul by bonds which alone cement friendships, and which render them firm and resolute.

The friendship between persons united in and with Jesus Christ is solid, constant, and invincible; it is not shaken or impaired by suspicion, calumny, dangers, or even by death itself.

He who loves only so long as he is beloved, ceases to love, when he receives some fancied displeasure from his friend.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.,

*Exhortation on chap. viii. of St. Matthew.*

. . . . .

We must take care not only to avoid leading a bad life, but we must not contract a friendship with those who live sinfully, for that, according to the Prophet, is included among the sins.

True friendship exists, not in family interests, nor with those persons by whom we are accustomed to be entertained, nor with those who flatter us, and whose company is dangerous; but with those who cherish the holy fear of God and the study of Holy Scripture.

ST. JEROME.

*Epistle ad Paulinum.*

## 104.—On Good Example.

LE PÈRE TEXIER.

Let your light shine before men, in order that seeing your good works, they glorify your Father who is in heaven."—MATTHEW V. 14.

gain knowledge, one need only watch and see virtue anating from a saintly man ; his very silence, joined to expressive gestures, plainly show all he would wish to

So says Emodius : *Illum vidisse eruditi est ; est enim illo loquax taciturnitas et erudite forma silentii.*

Every nation, however savage the people may be, how-  
: diversified in speech, understands the language of good  
mple, and one need not be astonished at what Ter-  
an says : " The confidence and invincible patience of  
early martyrs has proved to be the first commentary,  
the clearest interpretation of the Gospel."

: was this mute, but eloquent, philosophy which the  
aitive Church made use of, to enlighten the obscurity  
ie mysteries of our holy faith. It was that piety which  
imprinted on the faces of the first Christians, that  
a demeanour which they displayed when on their trial,  
especially that unshaken confidence and trust in God  
he midst of cruel tortures ; it was example like unto  
that touched the hearts of many a pagan.

ven the modest attire of the early Christians (says  
ullian) was a public censure of all the vices of the  
ters. Let us say rather, that all the early Christians  
: efficacious preachers.



When the great orators wished to make a deep impression on the judges and their hearers, they often felt at a loss for words, so they betook themselves to action; they knew by experience, that the sight of a body covered with wounds, of a cassock tinged with blood, of a procession of poor little orphans, of a widow bathed in tears, were certainly better adapted to excite compassion, than all the tropes and figures of the most pathetic of speeches; so true it is, that illustrative agents that attract the eye are far more successful than words which tickle the ear. Is it not also true that a general who harangues his soldiers before the battle, does not excite their enthusiastic courage half so much, as when they see him, sword in hand, lead on the desperate charge, and fight in front covered with dust and blood?

When the sinner contemplates the saint (who has been one like unto himself, subject to the selfsame weaknesses and frailties), he thinks of his cowardice in the practices of virtue, which he persuaded himself were too difficult, and he reflects, and ends in condemning his folly and malice. This is what St. Gregory says: *Dum peccator justum considerat, seipsum arguit atque condemnat.*

When, for example, your fine people, who live in the lap of luxury, or are hangers-on at the court of royalty, deem it derogatory to their high dignity to conform to the precepts of the Gospel; when they see a St. Louis, a St. Edward, a St. Casimir, the Eleazars, and others who were in a higher station in life, and more illustrious and valiant; when they read of kings living in the strict observance of the commandments, they are compelled to confess that they have deceived themselves, by fancying that the practice of every virtue is incompatible or inconsistent with their rank in life; when that judge, that merchant, that man of business, looks at David, who, though loaded with the cares of a kingdom, managed to find time to pray to God

seven times a day, and to employ hours in meditating upon eternity; when that delicate dame, who cannot endure the smell that exhales from the poor, sees the SS. Elizabeths of Hungary and of Portugal, and many other princesses visiting the hospitals every day, joyfully devoting hours to the care of the poor sick, to dressing their sores, to making their beds, to performing every kind of menial office; in fine, when bad and cowardly Christians contemplate the fervent lives of the saints, they are forced to acknowledge that it is their tepidity, their want of faith, that cramp their feeble efforts, and not the difficulty of sanctity. In truth, says St. Gregory the Great, when God brings before them those irreproachable witnesses, of which Job makes mention, they have no answer, no excuse, but are compelled to acknowledge their guilt.

I know full well that we all have not the capacity to write books on the defence of the faith that is in us, but we can all be living commentators on the perfection of every virtue. We all have not the authority to mount the pulpit and preach against vice, but we can preach, as St. Francis did, by the language of our works, which is far more persuasive than a sermon. We all are not rich enough to give abundant alms, but we can, if we wish, practise charity towards our neighbours in a more excellent way, and that is by good example; we can gently lead them on to God, who is the giver of all good gifts. This we all can do, if we wish.

It is related of St. Bernardine, that he had so grave and modest an air, that his presence alone inspired recollection in his companions. We read also, that many were converted by only looking upon St. Lucian the Martyr.

REV. FATHER TEXIER.

## 105.—On Good Works.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM and FATHER SEGNERI.

“ In all things, show thyself an example of good works.” —TITUS ii. 7.

THE forgetfulness of our good works is, in itself, our surest safeguard.

If you publicly display gold and precious vestments, you invite thieves to find out the means of robbing you ; but if you keep them hidden in some secret corner of your dwelling, they will be safe.

As it is with riches, so it is the same with virtues and good works. If we keep them in our memory, and as it were, expose them for sale, we arm our enemies against ourselves, and invite them to deprive us of the merit. But if they are known only to Him who knows everything, we shall possess and keep them in hopeful security.

Do not, therefore, expose the riches of your good works, for fear of their being taken from you, as was the case with the Pharisee, who carrying on his lips the treasures of his good works, gave Satan the opportunity of robbing him. He spoke only of giving thanks, and displayed his good works to God ; nevertheless, that did not shelter him, for it was not to return thanks to God, but to seek to be praised by many, to insult others, and to raise himself above them all.

If you return thanks to God, think only of pleasing Him alone ; do not seek to be known by men, and do not judge your neighbour.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.  
*On Matthew iii.*

When we neglect nothing and are careful to store up

the little gains we can make, we shall insensibly increase our riches ; it is nearly the same with spiritual riches.

Since our Divine Lord and Judge will keep an account of a glass of water, there is no good action we ought to despise, however small it may appear, and we must not be grieved if we cannot do great things; little things naturally are the forerunners of great actions. Neglect the former, and you will not be capable to do the latter.

It was to prevent this misfortune that Jesus Christ has promised to reward us for little things.

There is nothing more easy than visiting a sick person, nevertheless, God has fixed a great reward for this good work, however easy it may appear.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

*Opuscles.*

As the prospect of an abundant harvest soothes the labours and cheers the heart of the husbandman—so in like manner the hope and reward ought to support us and relieve our fatigues: *Debet in spe qui arat arare*. The harvest will be ours, for “In due time we shall reap” (*Gal. vi.*) We cannot cherish a doubt of this, without questioning the fidelity of the Lord our God.

The labourer, notwithstanding his wise precautions, his indefatigable care, his well-founded hopes, may, in a single night, find his fields torn and spoiled by a mighty storm or by some other accident. But the just man has nothing to fear. Let him but persevere in the practice of good works, and nothing in the world can hinder him the fruit: “And in doing good let us not fail; for in due time we shall reap, not failing” (*Gal. vi. 9*).

Some commentators explain those words of the Apostle in another way. It is right, say they, that we should sow without respite; since, in heaven, the harvest will be eternal: “We shall reap, not failing.” This is the opinion of St. Augustine:—

Do not relax in your efforts, says the holy doctor, and God will not fail to reward you. But if you tire of your work or flag in your efforts, the judgments of the Lord, says a prophet, will overwhelm you, like those bitter weeds that grow in the midst of the wheat. The words of the Apostle signify that we should not cease from preparing for the harvest: "We shall reap, not failing."

The husbandmen do not allow themselves to be over-fatigued, although they reap with joy; but the saints who gather in heaven what they have sown, partake of the purest pleasures in unalterable joy and pleasures ever new.

Who could have a disrelish in the abode of glory: "What shall come of thee by the pleasure of the Most High" (*Eccles.* xli.) The fruit of a few years is there, provided the work be persevered in. The choice of seed, the good soil, the beauty of the season do not produce a good harvest, if the seeds are not protected from the birds, who swarm to carry them away. That signifies, that we must conceal from men the good we do, and not seek for their esteem and praise, for this will deprive you of the merit in the sight of God. If foolish souls, by displaying the good they do, do not lose all the merit, they, at least, lose the greater part. You have sown, but you have reaped but little; the birds of heaven have eaten what you have sown. That is to say, the thoughts of vanity which are in your heart, and which you have complacently encouraged, will have deprived you of the reward which was prepared for you. Conceal then, with humility, your good works, when they are not necessary to be witnessed.

The time will come when you shall receive the reward a hundredfold.

"For in due time we shall reap, not failing."

FATHER SEGNERI, S.J.  
*Meditations.*

## 106.—On Holiness and Perfection.

PÈRE D'ARGENTAN and ST. AMBROSE.

"Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."

—MATTHEW v. 48.

I must no longer say that holiness is too high a state such a miserable wretch as I am to aspire to. I feel that God calls me to it, and that He wishes to con-  
tinue me, since He has prepared the way. I am sure that He wills that I should dare to aspire to it, and that I should do my utmost to reach perfection.

Indeed, what could I wish to be, if I did not wish to be saint? I must then be a reprobate, for there is no middle  
ground, either a saint or a reprobate. I must neither say I am too weak and frail to pretend to become a saint; nor but too well that I am a poor frail mortal, but I know that my Redeemer, who has spared no pains to make me a saint, has taken upon Himself my infirmities, in order to clothe me with His strength, and that I can say St. Paul, I can do all in Him who strengthens me.

What, then, have I to do to make me really and truly saint, according to the intention of the Son of God, who calls me to sanctity? I have only to put on the Lord Jesus, as the same Apostle says. Is there anything more to be done, provided that I have the will? If it were a question of passing great riches to be holy, many obstacles would have to be overcome, many legitimate pretexts would have to be decided, for each one would dispute who should have

them ; but holiness partly consists in despising riches, and in not allowing them to retain a hold of the heart.

In the same way, if, to be a saint, it was found necessary to be raised to great honours, or noble employments, or to undertake the management of a city or state, holiness would cost so dear that few persons would venture to accept the burden, and it would afford an excuse to many to decline the trial ; but what can hinder us, when we are told that the surest and safest road to sanctification is, to cherish a hidden life, to love humility and lowliness ?

In conclusion, to be virtuous and holy, if it were necessary to enjoy the pleasures of this life, would it not cost much ? should we not have to go to great expense ? and often, even then, should we not find much that was bitter, where we expected nought but pleasure and sweetness ? But to renounce sensual gratifications, to be content to suffer all the crosses inseparable from every condition of life, to prefer a mortified life of austerity and penance, is this what every one can do ? And thus, as there is no one who cannot but be holy and virtuous if he likes, it follows that all excuses must be frivolous, and cannot be allowed for, at the judgment-seat of God.

What ! is it then so difficult to love the three things which the Saviour of men has so much loved, and which contain every essential of a truly sanctified life, namely, poverty, contempt, and crosses ?

These three things often accompany a sanctified life, and we have so great a dread of them that we look upon them, as mortal enemies. Instead of this we should seek for them, and embrace them as the best means of becoming saints, thus becoming as so many sources of merit, and with these, we heap up treasures which will enrich us for all eternity. It is true that our lower nature feels a natural repugnance to, and rebels against, such strong remedies, but the grace of our Saviour, who comes to our aid, gives

us additional strength. It is this grace which, being the overflowing of His Divine Spirit, infuses into a soul a love of those things which He so much loved ; and He clothes it with a holy strength, in order that, by a supernatural virtue, he may embrace that which it fled from through a natural repugnance.

And how many saints, who were men like ourselves, and subject to the same infirmities, have been happier, more contented in their poverty, than the rich worldlings with all their treasures? How many of them have felt a sweeter consolation in the midst of scorn and contempt, than the most ambitious have felt, even when loaded with honours? And how many have felt a holier joy, even when carrying a heavy cross, than the sensualists in the midst of their pleasures.

LE PÈRE D'ARGENTAN.  
*Conference, No. 23.*

How can a truly virtuous man fail in anything? In what situation, will he not be powerful ; in what state of poverty, will he not be rich ; in what obscurity, will he not be brilliant ; in what inaction, will he not be industrious ; in what infirmity, will he not be vigorous ; in what weakness, will he not be strong ; in what solitude, will he not be accompanied ? for he will have for company the hope of a happy eternity ; for clothing, he will have the grace of the Most High ; for ornament, the promises of a halo of glory !

Let us recollect that the Saints were not of a more excellent nature than ours, but were more orderly and regular ; that they were not exempt from sins, but that they took pains to correct their faults.

ST. AMBROSE.  
*De Joseph.*



## 107.—On Human Respect.

MASSILLON and ST. GREGORY.

“Do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of Christ.”—GALATIANS i. 10.

HUMAN respect outrages the dignity of God, for the grandeur of the Creator requires that it should not be put in comparison with man, whom He has drawn from the slime of the earth, and all other greatnesses can be only regarded as nothing.

Now, wishing on the one hand to give yourself up to God, and kept back on the other hand by the fear of man, you say to Him; O Lord, I would devote myself to You, and I would serve You in preference to any one else, if, situated as I am, I was allowed to serve You without exposing myself to the criticism of the world; I should like to be able to break off all connection with the world, and to consecrate all to You alone, if, in declaring myself openly, I did not attract the notice of a thousand dangerous enemies. I feel a very great affection, it is true; You have filled my soul with a wholesome inclination for virtue, and I dream of being relieved from my grievous faults, of which I am a very slave; nevertheless, I have not the courage to put into practice my wish, for fear of losing the esteem of the world.

I feel that I am called upon to lead a life of piety; however, I drag my chains after me, although with regret, because the world does not wish to love You, and even does not wish me to love You.

Ah! if it depended solely on myself to choose the path, I would be all in all for You, O Lord; You would be the sole master of my heart, and one would see that, from henceforth, I would do that which I have not done in times past; but You well know what a number of bitter reproaches I should have to endure, were I to make known to the world my determination. You know that the world is most unmerciful to those who leave it, in order to enter into Your service, and, since I must say it, I feel that I have not the moral courage to despise the world, and that I have still the weakness of forgetting You, by remaining in its service.

I know what many would say, in answer to this. It is sufficient, they say, to serve Almighty God in secret, to give Him our hearts, without making any outward show of our devotion. Is there any need of making a parade of conversion, which can be done secretly, without the world knowing anything about it? Must we give to the public a sight where vanity and vainglory might possibly play a greater part than that of true piety? Can we not give to God a clean heart, and a faith so fervent that He will accept it?

A sinner, cannot he do good, serve God, weep for his sins, practise virtue, without its being known to men? A just and good man, can he not live by faith, without the world being cognisant of it?

I know that we must conform to the decorous usages and customs of the world, that we must accommodate ourselves to the times and places, that we must take certain measures with regard to our position in society, that charity prompts us to conceal much from the eyes of men, that we must be weak with the weak, strong with the strong, all to all, as says the great Apostle, and there is even a merit in hiding the good we do.

But I say that the allegiance we owe to the Almighty

is divided between God and a world which we ought to hate, and which world we flatter, by concealing our conversion and serving God in secret.

It is my opinion that it is being only half a Christian to blush at being all for Jesus, after unblushingly and wilfully following the pernicious maxims of the world.

. . . . .

Since a God-made man had become the jest of madmen, since He has been exposed to insults innumerable for love of you, can you wish to conceal your duty to Him, and to suffer something for His sake?

O man! how you ought to blush for being so ungrateful, and not give some tokens of affection to your God, who has loaded you with so many blessings, and especially the crowning gift of conversion. I do not say that your declaring yourself openly for God is unworthy of a generous man; but if you believe in His justice, why dissimulate when you have once embraced His service? A soul that has been reared in pious society, would not know how to counterfeit. If you have been taught to love our Lord, if you have promised to serve Him, why do you wish to conceal your love?

You pique yourself on having strength of mind, on having a moral courage in the business of this world, and in religion you are weaker than the ordinary run of mortals.

MASSILLON.

*Discourse on Human Respect.*

. . . . .

There is nothing we ought to dread more, than giving the preference to the fear of man, to that of the fear of God.

ST. GREGORY.

*On the Proverbs.*

## 108.—On Humility.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES and FATHER FABER.

“ The prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased Thee.”  
—JUDITH ix. 16.

IF, for acts of a true and sincere devotion the world shall esteem you mean, abject, or foolish, humility will make you rejoice at this happy reproach, the cause of which is not in you, but in those that reproach you.

What is it to love your own abjection? In Latin, *abjectio* signifies humility, and *humility* signifies abjection; so that, when our Blessed Lady, in her sacred canticle, says that all generations should call her blessed, because our Lord had regarded the humility of His handmaid, her meaning is, that our Lord had graciously looked down on her abjection, her meanness and lowliness, to heap His graces and favours upon her.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between the virtue of humility and abjection; for our abjection is the lowliness, meanness, and baseness that is in us, without our being aware of it, whereas the virtue of humility is a true knowledge and a voluntary acknowledgment of our abjection. Now the main point of this humility consists in being willing, not only to acknowledge our abjections, but in loving and delighting in it; and this, not through want of courage and generosity, but for the greater exaltation of the Divine Majesty, and holding our neighbour in greater estimation than ourselves.

Praise, honour, and glory, are not given to men for

every degree of virtue, but for an excellence of virtue; for by praise we endeavour to persuade others to esteem the excellency of those whom we praise; by honour we testify that we ourselves esteem them; and glory, in my opinion, is nothing but a certain lustre of reputation, that arises from the concurrence of praise and honour; so that honour and praise are like precious stones, from a collection of which, glory proceeds like a certain enamelling. Now humility, not enduring that we should have any opinion of our own excellence, or think ourselves worthy to be preferred before others, consequently cannot permit that we should hunt after praise, honour, or glory, which are only due to excellence.

Let us incessantly fix our eyes on Jesus Christ crucified, and march on in His service with confidence and sincerity, but yet with wisdom and discretion. He will be the protector of our reputation; and should He suffer it to be taken from us, it will be either to restore it with advantage, or to make us profit in holy humility, one ounce of which is preferable to ten thousand pounds of honours.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

Humility is the perfume of God. It is the fragrance which He leaves behind, who cannot be humbled Himself, because He is God. It is the odour, the stain, the token that the Creator leaves upon the creature, when He has pressed upon it for a moment. It must be a law of the world of grace, because we find it in Mary, in the saints, and in the faintest, most nearly indistinguishable way in ourselves. Perhaps it is something inseparable from God. We trace the Most High, the Incommunicable, by it in the Old Testament. We trace Jesus by it in the New. The glory of humility is in the human nature of our Lord, on which the mysterious pressure of the Divine Nature rested for

evermore. It is this inevitable perfume that God leaves behind Him which hinders His altogether hiding His traces from us. It is "the myrrh, and stacte, and cassia from His ivory houses."

Mary has found Him, and she has laid down in the lowliest, most flowery valley of humility, and the fragrance of God has perfumed her garments, her "gilded clothing surrounded with variety."

Humility grows far more rapidly, and blossoms more abundantly, in the mere thought of the immensity of God's love of us, and the unintelligible prodigality of His fatherly affection for us, where there is no thought of self at all, even in the way of merited self-reproach. This vision, for it is nothing but a beautiful celestial vision, overshadows our souls. The fires of our selfish passions go out in it. The glare of the world seems softened through it. There is nothing to distract us in the absorbing simplicity of this one sight which we are beholding. There is nothing to awaken self-love, and to aim it against the nobler or better thoughts of self-forgetfulness.

Humility is never more intense than when it is thus simply overwhelmed by love; and never can our souls be more completely overwhelmed by love than when they rest, silent and wonderstricken, beneath the shadow of the Blessed Sacrament.

Nothing teaches us humility so much as the Blessed Sacrament. Our hearts for very love are constrained to imitate Him in our own feeble way, and to worship Him in His sacramental presence by a continual exercise of interior humility.

FATHER FABER (Orat.)

*Foot of the Cross and the Blessed Sacrament.*

## 109.—On the Love of our Neighbour.

“The love of our neighbour is the fulfilment of the law.”

—ROMANS xiii. 8.

### *Short Extracts from Divers Saints.*

IN reference to this commandment, St. Bernardine, of Sienna, remarks, that we should love our neighbour with a genuine affection, and not in the same way as we love things necessary or useful, such as bread, a house, and other things which are for our use or for our amusement; these we do not love as ourselves, but for ourselves.

. . . . .

St. Chrysostom says that when the Son of God gave us the best of prayers, He did not intend that we should say “My Father” but, Our Father; inasmuch, as we have a common Father in heaven we should consider all men as our brethren, and that in this way we should love each other with a mutual love, with a love stronger in grace than in nature, as we have all an equal right to a vocation to a supernatural life, the same hope of a heavenly reward.

. . . . .

How sweet is this command! exclaims the saintly Jesuit, Père de la Colombière; does it not appear to be worthy of the goodness and wisdom of God? Is it not reasonable that men who are endowed with one and the same nature, who have one and the same Father in heaven, who are

obliged to live in society, who are all fellow-travellers, and who ought to meet again in heaven, is it not reasonable, says he, that we should love one another here below, and should help one another in the same degree as we would wish to be helped ourselves?

. . . . .

The love of our neighbour may be placed in the same category as the love we owe to God. All who say "Lord, Lord" (that is to say, all who say that they love God), shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Good works and proofs of that love are requisite. He alone will enter the kingdom of heaven who does the will of My Father. The same may be said of the love of our neighbour. We must show it by solid proofs.

As a Christian, you are expressly to love your neighbour, therefore it is certain that you will best show your affection, by tendering all the help that it may be in your power to give him.

The love of our neighbour, says St. Paul, is a debt which is not discharged in the ordinary way; that is to say, a debt once paid, is paid once for all. This is what St. Paul means, we are always beholden in the love we are obliged to have for one another.

The more you pay in love and charity, the more you will owe, says St. Augustine.

. . . . .

He who, says St. Fulgentius, does not believe that he has aught to pay to his neighbour, as if he had discharged the debt, but he ought rather to weep for himself as being without charity.

Do not believe that, when you have forgiven your brother, you have cancelled the obligation, and that you have already given sufficient proofs of your love.



We are ever indebted to our brethren, on occasion of the mutual bond there is between you and them.

We are members of the same body, and if charity be not in our hearts, we renounce this bond ; and being no longer united with our neighbour, we have no claim on the love of Jesus, our Model and Master.

. . . . .

St. Chrysostom also says, in his Homilies of St. Matthew: One loves because he is loved, another because he is honoured, another because he thinks that it will be of service to him ; but, alas ! how seldom it is that you meet with a person who loves his brother as he ought for the sake of Jesus. Nearly all friends are allied by the bonds of an affection which is of the world, worldly.

. . . . .

St. Bernard says, that he who does not love God, cannot love his neighbour with a sincere affection ; God therefore must be our first love, in order that we may be able to love our neighbour, in God and for God.

. . . . .

St. Philip Neri tells us, that in dealing with our neighbour, we must assume as much pleasantness of manner as we can, and by this affability, win him to the way of virtue.

## 110.—On the Love of our Enemies.

ARCHBISHOP CARRANZA, LE PÈRE JOLY, and  
ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN.

“But I say to you : Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you, and for those who calumniate you, in order that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven.”—MATTHEW v. 44.

[BARTHOLOMEW DE CARRANZA, Archbishop of Toledo, was born at Miranda in Navarre. He joined the Order of St. Dominic, and was afterwards Professor of Theology in his Dominican College. In 1545 he was sent to the Council of Trent. In 1554, Philip II., having espoused Queen Mary, brought B. de Carranza to England, where he did his utmost to convert many to the One Faith. On Philip's return to Spain, this king nominated him to the Archbishopric of Toledo.

Calumniated by his enemies, he suffered with patience a long imprisonment, and died in the year 1576.

Gregory XIII. wrote an epitaph for his tomb, in which he spoke of him as a man, equally illustrious for his virtues as his learning,—a man modest in prosperity, and patient in adversity.]

LET us reflect seriously, on the condition made by our Saviour when He taught us to say to our heavenly Father those words, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.”

How easy it is to obtain pardon, if we do that which mainly depends on our own exertions ; for we have a right to ask for pardon from our Lord, if we have forgiven those who may have trespassed against us. One could not realise this, did we not meditate on the wondrous wisdom of the Son of God.

His design being to establish charity amongst men, He makes use of the want we all experience of having need

of His mercy; and since the state of sin is our greatest misery, He is willing to grant to us the remission of sin, on condition that we do unto our neighbours the greatest favour we have it in our power to bestow, namely, the forgiveness of their trespasses against us.

Let us endeavour to walk in the footsteps of those patriarchs and early martyrs mentioned in Holy Scripture. Let us imitate a Joseph, who repaid with presents all the outrages he had received from his brothers; a Moses, who prayed for that rebellious people who were continually waging war against him; a David, who to Saul returned good for evil; a St. Stephen, who, when he was being stoned to death, implored pardon from God for his executioners; a St. Paul, who, after having been cruelly persecuted by the Jews, worked incessantly for their conversion.

These grand examples, ought they not to teach us to do good to those who are our enemies?

B. CARRANZA.

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[ABBÉ JOLY, Dean of Langres Cathedral, President of the Chamber of Deputies of Burgundy, was born at Dijon in 1715, and died in 1775. He was a priest of considerable literary attainments, and published several useful works, in his native city.]

I also say to you, Love your enemies. It is I, says Jesus, who speak to you.

If a mere man had said so, you would point out the gravity of the offence, and the justice of your resentment. If a person, for whom you have the highest respect, were to entreat you to forgive another, you might, perhaps, answer that you could obey him in all things else, but in this case you have been very deeply wronged. If a prince or king were to tell you the like, you would suspend your vengeance, and give some mark of an outward reconciliation, but in your heart, you would cherish a hatred which would burst forth, sooner or later.

But it is God who speaks; it is God who commands you to "love your enemies, and do good to those that hate you." To so precise a command, what have you to answer? Consider, says Tertullian, the dignity and infinite majesty of Him who commands.

Do not speak of passion, human feelings, the pleasure of revenge, the atrocity of the insult, the indignity of the affront. It is God who speaks, and He must be obeyed. Do not tell me that this is difficult. Was it difficult to David? Was it so to St. Stephen?

It is difficult, I grant; but it is God who has made it. It is difficult; but it is His will that you should surmount the difficulty.

If, in a violent persecution, He were to ask you to lay down your life, as He has done to some martyrs, would you refuse to give it Him? If He asked for the last drop of your blood, would you not shed it joyfully?

He commands you to love your enemies and forgive them, is not this enough!

LE PÈRE JOLY.

. . . . .

It is more glorious to bear silently an affront, in imitation of Christ, than to retort with a sharp and sarcastic reply.

If it should happen that the remembrance of an injury stirs up your soul to anger, call to mind what the Son of God has suffered for us, and how comparatively few have been your sufferings. By this means, you will throw water on the smouldering flames, and you will be the better enabled to smother your resentment.

ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN.  
*Sentences.*

## 111.—On Meditation and Mental Prayer.

MASSILLON, ST. FRANCIS OF SALES, and  
ALPHONSE RODRIGUEZ, S.J.

“Before prayer prepare thy soul ; and be not, as a man that tempteth God.”  
—ECCLESIASTICUS xviii. 23.

THE precious gift of prayer, so essential to religion, so glorious to the creature, so favourable to the sinner, so beneficial for all men, is, nowadays, either despised or neglected. It is to induce us to practise this that the Church proposes as our model the early Christians, who had no better occupation, no more agreeable duty.

Indeed, O my God ! if we were only to think of its advantage and benefit, what consolations, what sweetness, would we not experience from it ? Forced to live for a time in this land of exile, far from Thee, and far from Thy celestial abode, what should we do without the salutary exercise of prayer ?

What better consolation can we hope for, except by taking advantage by this means of raising up our thoughts to heaven, of placing ourselves in direct communication with Thee, of consulting Thee in all our scruples, of exposing all our wants, of telling Thee of all our troubles, or of offering up all our pains and sufferings ?

What other resource can there be for us, except by this holy exercise, by which we shall find an anointing grace which can soften our griefs, a charitable hand to dry our tears, a secret, sacred ray to enlighten our path, a Father who will listen to our petitions, a Physician who will cure

all our infirmities, a Judge who will interest Himself in all our concerns, a Master who is ever instructing us?

What other consolation will remain, if we have neglected to seek for this potent remedy?

MASSILLON.

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Prayer places our understanding in the brightness and light of God, and exposes our will to the heat of heavenly love. There is nothing that so effectually purges our understanding from its ignorance, or our will from its depraved affections, as prayer. It is the water of benediction, which makes the plants of our good desires grow green and flourish. It washes our souls from their imperfections, and quenches the thirst of passion in our hearts. But, above all, I recommend mental and cordial prayer, and particularly that which has the life and passion of our Lord for its object. By making Him the frequent subject of your meditation, your whole soul will be replenished with Him; you shall learn His carriage, and frame all your actions according to this model. As He is the light of the world, it is then by Him, in Him, and for Him that we ought to acquire lustre and be enlightened. He is the tree of desire, under whose shadow we ought to refresh ourselves. He is the living fountain of Jacob, in which we may wash away all our stains.

In fine, as little children, by hearing their mother talk, lisp at first, and learn at length to speak their language; so we, by keeping close to our Saviour by meditation, and observing His words, actions, and affections, shall, by the help of His grace, learn to speak, to act, and to will, like Him.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

. . . . .

The first thing we must do in prayer is, to represent to ourselves, by the help of our memory, the point or mystery

which we may wish to be the subject of our prayer. Then the understanding must examine this point, and consider all the particulars of it. Finally, the will must produce acts, according as the understanding has digested the matter, which had been proposed to it by the memory. But since this discourse of the understanding is the source whence all our acts in prayer flow; and since we can make no act which does not necessarily spring from this our meditation, it follows that we must be particularly careful to make this well.

The truth is, this proposition is self-evident, for there is no one that has the least tincture of philosophy, but knows that the will is a blind power, unable to attach itself to anything, unless the understanding guides it. Hence it is a maxim received by all philosophers, "that nothing can be willed unless it is first known." The will, having of itself no light, must borrow it from the understanding, which goes before it to give it knowledge, and to discover what it ought to love or hate. It is this that made St. Augustine say, that "we may love the things we never saw, but never those we have not known;" and St. Gregory says, "No one can love what he is entirely ignorant of."

The reason of this is, that the object of the will being a *known* good, we cannot love anything, but because we perceive it is good and deserving of love; just as, on the contrary, we do not hate a thing or fly from it, unless we conceive it to be bad, and deserving of hatred.

It is clear, therefore, that the operation of the understanding is the foundation of all our acts in prayer; whence it follows, that meditation is most necessary, and that prayer cannot be perfect, unless meditation goes before, or accompanies it, as says Hugo of St. Victor.

A. RODRIGUEZ, S. J.  
*From "Christian Perfection."*

## 112.—On Meekness.

ST. AMBROSE.

“Blessed are the meek : for they shall possess the land.”

—MATTHEW v. 4.

WE must accustom ourselves to perform all our actions with quiet serenity ; force of habit can correct or subdue the most obstinate bad temper. But because some are naturally so impetuous and violent, that it is difficult to effect an immediate cure ; it would be as well to reflect on the motives which engender impatience, in order to induce us to effect a gradual cure.

When ebullitions of passion come upon us so suddenly, that there is no time for reflection, we must at least try to soothe them, if we cannot immediately master them. It is sometimes proper to make a desperate effort ; but we must always try to conquer by degrees, more especially when the first bursts of impatience or anger assail us. It is recommended in Holy Writ ; give time for anger to evaporate, and then extinguish it entirely. We must not only do what we can to prevent our getting into a passion, but we must use greater efforts to subdue it when it does come on. Those little outbursts of petulance, which are more amusing than bitter, are innocent in children ; they fire up and are appeased in a moment, and all is soon forgotten. Let us not be ashamed to imitate them in this ; for does not our Saviour say, If you do not become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven?



Never answer an angry person with a haughty haste ; 'f *he* be ill-tempered, why fall into the same fault ? When two flinty stones are quickly rubbed together, sparks will fly out.

If you cannot cure anger by those means which a calmer judgment would suggest, you must have recourse to stratagem. Patience is a great assistant ; for time softens the most violent passion. If we should be exposed to the provocations of a person, who is continually having recourse to sharp, impertinent answers, and we feel that we have not sufficient command over our own temper, we can, at least, moderate our tongue by keeping silent. Holy Scripture gives us this advice : " Suffer in silence, and do not have recourse to sharp retorts," you can then seek reconciliation, and do your best to make it lasting.

We have a noble example in the conduct of Jacob. His first care was to keep his mind free from any temptation to break the precept of meekness.

If you have not the strength of mind to do this, at any rate, you can bridle your tongue, and allow no bitter reply to escape your lips. When you have taken all such precautions, you will find that more is to be done to secure a mild and even temper.

Would you wish to know how to act when any injury or affront is imposed on you ? Above all, do not return evil for evil ; pay no attention to the malice of another ; there is no occasion to be wicked, because another is wicked. Take care to preserve self-respect, and do nothing which might be a reproach for you afterwards.

The heathens have often quoted a sensible reply of one of their philosophers. One of his attendants had greatly displeased him by an act of gross injustice. Go ! unhappy man, said he, how severely would I punish you, were I not angry !

King David acted in a similar way ; at a time when he

was tempted to inflict vengeance, he gained a complete victory over his temper, by not uttering a single word to those who had wronged him. Abigail, by her entreaties, calmed that gentle prince, who was at the head of his soldiers, and who was on his road to avenge the insults of Nabal.

It is a sure sign of a noble disposition, if you listen to sincere petitions, and grant what is demanded of you. David always felt rejoiced when he forgave his enemies, and he praised the cleverness of that woman, who so well knew his tenderness of heart, that she obtained all she sought for. That royal prophet was not insensible to injury, for he cries out,—I am hurt at what evil-disposed persons have said; had I consulted my evil genius, I should have rejoiced to inflict vengeance. But this glorious and pacific king, on second thoughts, continues to say—Oh! who will give me the wings of the dove, that I may seek peace in flight? And notwithstanding all their insults and outrages, he preferred to remain in peace.

He says in another place: "Be angry, but sin not." This is a moral precept, which teaches us to allay any little asperity which we cannot altogether stifle.

ST. AMBROSE.  
*De Officiis.*

. . . . .

Meekness preserves within us the image of God, but anger blots it out. If any hard or cutting words should inadvertently escape from your lips, apply the remedy and cure, from the same mouth that caused so sensitive a wound.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

## 113.—On Modesty.

ST. AMBROSE and ALPHONSE RODRIGUEZ.

“The fruit of modesty is the fear of the Lord, riches, and glory, and life.”

—PROVERBS xxii. 4

MODESTY is a great relief to our words and actions; it prevents us from committing many faults, and from giving utterance to words likely to shock those who listen to us. Often an inconsiderate word betrays us, and reveals our secret thoughts. Modesty should even regulate the sound of our voice, so that it may soften down any violent outburst, and should never depart from the rules prescribed.

Silence, the guardian of our hidden virtues, is also very necessary for the preservation of modesty, and is very beneficial when kept under properly, not however disdainfully, or in a contemptuous, haughty way. Modesty should pervade all that is exterior—our walk, our gestures, and our movements. All outside appearances reveal the condition of our mind; although our passions are hidden, they manifest themselves exteriorly; one easily knows if a man is fickle, haughty, mischievous, or if he is wise, patient, and reserved; the motion of the body is a species of voice which bespeaks all that is passing in the soul.

We often see some people walk as if they were on the stage of a theatre, who march as if they were counting their steps, or who move about like dummies. I can well understand that a well-educated person should not walk or run hastily, unless necessity or fear compels him to do so: I fancy that he should be neither too fast nor too slow in

his movements, nor that he should be as stiff as a statue. There is a medium in all things.

A man of good breeding should, even in walking, keep up a certain decorum and gravity, without affectation or pompous display. This gravity should be natural, devoid of artifice or constraint. All that is counterfeit or unnatural will always be unpleasing.

Modesty is suitable for all ages, and for all classes of persons ; for all times and places ; it is especially becoming in youth, and is essentially the dowry of all young people. In whatsoever state or condition of life we may be placed, we should carefully cherish decorum in all we do, and make this the business of our life.

An old philosopher remarks, that we should even regulate our manners with a certain seasoning, or rather a certain something, I know not how to express, which imparts a gracefulness to all we do. We must not, however, let this agreeableness appear affected, for nothing unnatural can ever be pleasing.

The tone of our voice should be firm, and neither mincing nor effeminate. There are some who disguise their words with an affectation of false gravity, savouring somewhat of malice or sarcasm.

We should further examine into what is appropriate for every one. What would be suitable for one sex, would often be ridiculous for the other. All that we may wish to do, however, we cannot hope to please everybody.

Let not your manners appear affected or effeminate, but above all, avoid all that is rude, gross, or impolite. Let us follow all that nature inspires us with. If we try to be natural, we shall the more easily keep within the bounds of decorum and good breeding.

ST. AMBROSE.  
*Officii. i., xviii., xix.*

It is certain that there is nothing more edifying, more winning, than a wise and modest exterior; because men can only see what is outside, and it is that exterior which moves and preaches more than a torrent of words. Indeed, a humble and mortified exterior has often induced people to be devout, and has given them a contempt for worldly things; it has excited sinners to compunction, and has raised up their hearts to heavenly things.

It is a dumb preaching, more effective than the most eloquent of sermons; and the reason why men so esteem modesty and propriety, and are so edified by them, is that they always draw this inference therefrom, that there must be much that is good within. The face, says St. Jerome, is the mirror of the soul, and the eyes, dumb as they are, reveal hidden secrets; there is no mirror which better reflects exterior objects.

In the 19th chapter of Ecclesiasticus we read: "A man is known by his look, and a wise man, when thou meetest him, is known by his countenance. The attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the man, show what he is." And the Holy Ghost, speaking through the mouth of the wise man, says: "An unprofitable man walketh with a perverse mouth; he winketh with the eyes, presseth with the foot, speaketh with the finger" (*Prov.* vi. 12).

Besides this, as an outward wicked deportment is an index of inward disorder, so exterior modesty is a sign of inward composure. It is on account of this that men are usually moved and edified by it.

St. Gregory of Nazianzen, speaking of Julian the Apostate, says: "A great many knew not Julian, till he made himself known by his infamous actions, and by his abuse of sovereignty; but for my part, when I first knew him, and lived and conversed with him at Athens, I never could perceive the least sign of goodness in him. He

carried his head extremely high; his shoulders, as well as his eyes, were always in motion; his behaviour was haughty and fierce; his feet never stood still; every moment either anger caused his nostrils to swell, or disdain drew them in. He was continually trying to be witty, or would indulge in low and coarse buffoonery, and his laughter was ungraciously loud. He would freely grant and deny the same thing in the same breath; he would speak without rule or judgment; he would ask silly questions, and give impertinent answers.

“By such exterior marks as these, I knew him beforehand, long before I was made acquainted with his impiety, and this news only confirmed my former judgment of him.

“Those that lived with us then at Athens, were they here present, would testify that, having observed his manners, I exclaimed, Oh! city of Rome, what a monster art thou feeding! This I then said, and at the same time I heartily wished I might be mistaken; and without doubt it had been much better that I had been so, since we then, should not have seen those evils which have almost rendered the world desolate.”

Thus you see that an irregular exterior is a mark of a disordered interior; as an exterior modesty is a mark of a composed interior, which is the reason why men are ordinarily so much moved and edified by it.

ALPHONSE RODRIGUEZ.  
*On Christian Perfection, x.*

## 114.—On Mortification.

FATHERS SEGNERI, CROISET, and ST. BERNARD.

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”—LUKE ix. 23.

THEY that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences, said St. Paul (*Ephes. i. 24*).

Remark that he does not say, only those that are Christ's have crucified their vices, but they that have crucified their flesh with their vices.

This is, in order to effect a cure we must go to the source, and the flesh is the root of the evils of our soul. But in order to effect a perfect cure, we must chastise the body, and bring it under subjection, and this the great Apostle said of himself: “I chastise my body.”

How do you act in this particular? What harsh treatment of your body do you practise? Do you fast? What are the austerities you practise?

If instead of mortifying your flesh, and bringing it under subjection, you think only of feeding it, and procuring for it every comfort, you are not Christ's. Why? Because, “they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences.”

It is not enough merely to crucify the flesh, but we must crucify the vices. That is to say, we must add interior mortification to exterior mortification. In fact, the one should not be practised without the other; for it would be of little use to chastise the body, and bring it under sub-

jection, if our hearts and affections slavishly cherish inordinate desires.

St. Paul points out two things which we ought to destroy, through the practice of interior mortification, namely, our bad habits and our vices. *Cum vitiis et concupiscentiis*. I say, our bad habits, for however careful we may be to mortify ourselves, we always fall into some actual sin; but as for habitual sins, if we fight them with courage and perseverance, we shall in the end totally destroy them. With regard to our vices, we do not entirely destroy them, but we can at least weaken the power they have over us, and if we cannot exterminate them on the cross, we can, at least, attach them thereto, and this we ought to try to do, if we wish to be Christ's; for "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, and the vices and concupiscences."

The Apostle does not tell you, If you live according to the Spirit, but he says, "If by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live" (*Rom. viii. 13*). One can easily live according to the flesh, and that happens but too often; but no man on earth can always live according to the Spirit; that pure spiritual life is to be found only in heaven, where the flesh, then fully under the control of the Spirit, does not feel the least inclination of rebellion.

Thus what St. Paul recommends us is, to resist the assaults of the flesh by curbing our desires, by checking our ardour, by a continual opposition to the wicked suggestions of our will; in a word, by bridling our passions, by these means, and thus overcoming every temptation. Nevertheless, the Apostle does not require that kind of mortification which consists in austerities, scourgings, &c., although these are useful for humbling ourselves, and bringing us under the dominion of the Spirit.

But the ordinary mortification, so indispensable to every



Christian, is that we have just explained, "If by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."

REV. PÈRE SEGNER.  
*Meditations.*

The exercise of interior mortification is a kind of penance, which no one has a right to be dispensed from. It has been the invariable custom of all the saints, and known to those who have ever had a wish to be perfect. One has only to be attentive to the Spirit of God. The love of Jesus is so ingenious on this point, that He inspires the simplest and most unpolished minds with skilful methods of self-mortification, that far surpass the comprehension of the worldly wise, and might pass off as so many small miracles.

There is nothing happens that may not give us an opportunity of thwarting our inclinations; there is no time or place that may not be chosen for practising interior mortification, without in the least interfering with the rules of common sense.

For example, we can be silent when we have a desire to talk, we can close our eyes when we wish to see. The longing to hear the news, or to know what is going on, what is done, what is said, the wish to see a person, to relate an anecdote, to learn the success of a business which interests us; in a word, all over-eagerness is a subject of mortification, that would prove to be of more than usual merit, and of which God alone would be the witness.

Nothing is more plentiful than the opportunities of interior mortification. Mention of a few will be wonderfully instructive. A word said *a propos*, a harmless joke, just to enliven the conversation—these refrained from, might be the matter of a beautiful sacrifice. There is scarcely an hour in the day which does not afford us an opportunity of mortification.

Sitting or standing, one can never fail of finding an inconvenient seat or posture without being noticed.

A person may be often interrupted when particularly engaged, and as often can reply with as much mildness and civility, as if he had not been very busy. The ill-humour of a person at home, the annoyances of a servant, the ingratitude of a man who is indebted to you for past kindnesses; all these, may exercise the patience of a good and pious man.

In conclusion, the inconveniences depending on place, weather, or persons, which are endured unnoticed or unheeded, are petty opportunities of mortifying one's self, it is true; but the mortification in these trifling matters is not little; it is very meritorious, and it may be said, that the greatest graces are the fruit of these petty mortifications.

PÈRE CROISET.  
*Exercises de Piété.*

. . . . .

A man must learn to treat his body as if it were diseased, that is to say, he must abstain from the food he longs for, but which would be hurtful to his body, and submit to take that which would do it good, notwithstanding the repugnance he may naturally feel.

Thus much for bodily mortification, but spiritual mortification is a kind of martyrdom; it has not the visible torture of the iron chain, but it has something far more troublesome, and that is, its duration.

ST. BERNARD.  
*Epistle to his Brothers.*

## 115.—On Obedience.

SS. FRANCIS DE SALES, GREGORY  
and PÈRE LAMBERT.

"Let every soul be subject to higher powers ; for there is no power but from God."—ROMANS xiii. 1.

THERE are two sorts of obedience, the one necessary, the other voluntary. By that which is necessary, you must obey your ecclesiastical superiors, as the Pope, the bishop, the parish priest, and such as are commissioned by them ; as also your civil superiors, such as your Queen and the magistrates she has established for administering justice ; and, finally, your domestic superiors, namely, your father and mother, master and mistress.

Now this obedience is called *necessary*, because no man can exempt himself from the duty of obeying his superiors, God having placed them in authority to command and govern, each in the department that is assigned to him. You must then of necessity obey their commands ; but, to be perfect, follow their counsels also, nay, even their desires and inclinations, so far as charity and discretion will permit. Obey them when they order that which is agreeable, such as to eat, or to take recreation ; for though there seems no great virtue to obey on such occasions, yet it would be a great sin to disobey. Obey them in matters indifferent, as to wear this or that dress, to go one way or another, to sing or to be silent, and this will be a very commendable obedience. Obey them in things hard, troublesome, or disagreeable, and this will be a perfect

obedience. Obey, in fine, meekly, without reply ; readily, without delay ; cheerfully, without repining ; and, above all, lovingly, for the love of Him who, through His love for us, made Himself obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross, and who, as St. Bernard says, rather chose to part with His life than His obedience.

We call that obedience voluntary, to which we oblige ourselves by our own choice, and which is not imposed upon us by another. We do not commonly choose our prince, our bishop, our father or mother, nor do even wives, many times, choose their husbands, but we choose our confessor and director ; if then, in choosing, we make a vow to obey, as the holy St. Teresa did, who, besides her obedience solemnly vowed to the superior of her order, bound herself by a simple vow to obey Father Gratian.

We must obey every one of our superiors, according to the charge he has over us. In political matters, we must obey our queen ; in ecclesiastical matters, our prelates ; in our domestic circle, father, master, or husband ; and in what regards the private conduct of the soul, our ghostly father or director.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES,  
*Devout Life.*

What would become of the world without obedience ? What more necessary than this virtue to maintain order and discipline ? Experience has proved this. Where obedience is not observed, there can be nothing but trouble ; disorder glides in, and peace is banished.

A dis-united whole is threatened with destruction, and ruin is unavoidable. But, on the contrary, where obedience is kept, all will be edified. In noticing this perfect unanimity one would see that these contented minds are perfectly united. If there can be anything lasting on the earth, it is when it is united, and when everything is in

perfect order, and this can never be the case where obedience is not strictly observed.

The Apostle St. Peter, in recommending obedience, takes every precaution. Had there been any way of dispensing with obedience, it would no doubt be feasible with those who abuse their authority. Is this a legitimate excuse for non-obedience? Can we throw off the yoke and absolutely refuse to obey? If you did, you are condemned by St. Peter, for he says (*chap.* iii. 18), "Be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but to the froward." How mad is the world! the foundation of their joy is, that they are free from all control, and are masters of their conduct. How many there are to whom every kind of restraint is insupportable, and who ever sigh to be free! They are like so many prodigal sons, who cannot endure their father's government; they are enemies of their own happiness; they wish to be their own masters, and soon find that they have been wofully deceived.

Unhappy is that man who, following his own perverse will, wishes to be his own master. When God is angry with men, and wills to punish them, one of His severest chastisements is to leave them to themselves, and let them go according to their hearts, "So I let them go according to the desires of their heart: they shall walk in their own inventions" (*Psa.* lxxx. 13).

How has God punished infidel nations when, following blindly the inordinate desires of bestial passion, they excited His wrath by committing the most abominable crimes? "Wherefore, God gave them up to the desires of their heart, He delivered them up to shameful affections" (*Rom.* i.)

But he who willingly obeys, need not fear to be punished in this way. As he is resolved not to follow his own will, he need not expect that God would punish him, or leave him to the desires of his heart.

What, then, can be more advantageous than to obey,

since obedience is a sure protection from that rigorous punishment which is so frightful, and which is so much to be dreaded?

Taking into consideration the good results of obedience, we can only help saying, that it is by far more beneficial to obey than to command. There is nothing, in fact, more to be dreaded than the being raised to a high post of authority. Wise men have shrunk from its heavy weight of responsibility. And wherefore? because they know how dangerous it is to command.

To seek for power, and to strive for a high post, is to wish to be your own enemy. Have we not enough to answer for ourselves without the responsibility of having to answer for others? Do you doubt that all those who command, are responsible to Almighty God for those under their authority?

See how St. James in his epistle (iii. 1) warns his brothers; does he not say, "Be ye not many masters, my brethren, knowing that you receive the greater judgment?"

Those who are under the yoke of obedience are safer than others, and consequently happier.

LAMBERT.

*Discourses on Ecclesiastical Life.*

. . . . .

Obedience is better than sacrifice: it is both right and reasonable that it should be preferred, for in sacrifices, we immolate another's flesh, but in obedience, we sacrifice our own will. Consequently the number of our sacrifices is in proportion to the number of our acts of obedience, because in bending to the authority of a man for the love of God, we overcome the pride, which is so natural to us.

ST. GREGORY.

*On Fourth Book of Kings.*

## 116.—On Order and Regularity.

LE PÈRE HAINEUVE and ST. AUGUSTINE.

“Let all things be done decently, and according to order.”

—1 CORINTHIANS xiv. 40.

IF we knew how to spend our time in observing the order and regularity which is prescribed for all the actions of our life, how rich we should be in a short time! What a mass of merits should we not accumulate! What a crown of glory should we not obtain! In a word, what treasures for heaven!

Not one of our actions would be void of virtue; there would be neither word nor thought, but which would deserve a reward, not a moment that would not be of value for all eternity; there would not be a sigh from the heart, but which would be received by God as an act of love. Ah! how precious would be such a life passed thus holily!

Every moment would be worth a year, and every day would be worth an age. It is a short but certain way of acquiring the merit of the most honourable age, since, as the wise man says, it is not the number of years, but the number of good deeds, which do honour to that respectable old age, and that a man who knows how to regulate his time properly, finds that he has done more in a few days, than he who has lived a whole life of irregularity and disorder.

Alas! Christians, what a waste of time! What a number of days ought to be blotted out from our lives! What a number of years are counted as nothing!

To one who is to-day sixty or eighty years of age, is still only a child, if his merits are reckoned by his years ; to one who is a child, aged one hundred years (who, full of wrinkles and infirmities, must render an account of his life to that just Judge, who looks only at his actions), will then see, that although he has dwelt a long time on earth, yet he has lived but a short time.

If a profane historian had written the history of Saul, he would have argued that this prince must have reigned forty years over Judea, because the sun had run its course as many times ; but Holy Scripture, which does not heed the calculations of astronomers, but rather measures the years by merits than by months, says, that he reigned only two years ; because, during that time he had lived a holy life, following strictly the commandments of God.

I do not fear to assert, that the best way of knowing the interior of a person, is to see and watch her exterior behaviour, that is to say, how she regulates her time, her actions, her employments, and all that appears outwardly. It is only fair to presume that a Christian so orderly in her exterior actions, has a still greater care for all that is more essential and important, which would be to keep her conscience in order, to regulate her desires, her affections, and all the emotions of her soul.

This presumption is also so well founded, that as one cannot better judge of a cause than from its effect, so in like manner one cannot have a surer sign, that that man is really virtuous who, in all his actions, is orderly and regular, and does everything with the intention of pleasing God.

In reference to this, you will find that the Holy Scriptures (and this has been noticed by some commentators) have recommended, that we should watch twenty-four times, and this is to teach us, that we must not allow any hour of a day to pass without taking pains to do what we ought to do, and that, too, in the very best way.



This is not meant that we should abridge the necessary hours for sleep ; but it is, as St. Paul says, whether we sleep or whether we are awake, we should do all things regularly, in order that all may lead to our sanctification, and thus refer all that we do to the honour and glory of the Sovereign Master, whom we should always honour and obey.

This is the surest proof that we are serving God faithfully and truly.

And what a consolation it will be, at the hour of death, to be able to feel that we have endeavoured to perform all for the love of God, and that, if through frailty, we have not been able to do all things well, we have at least tried to be just and holy.

If a single well-employed day is worthy of a reward, what a weight of glory will be in store for us, if our life has been one continued round of order and regularity.

LE PÈRE HAINEUVE.  
*De L'ordre : Discours, x.*

. . . . .

It is God who regulates everything ; and of all that He has done, there is nothing that can be found to be out of order ; we are often ignorant of the reason why He has done one thing, in preference to another.

There is a rule and order which is necessary in this life, a regularity which leads us to God, if we keep it faithfully ; if we fail in this, we swerve from the path which conducts us to His heavenly kingdom ; for all is beautiful where there is order, and the Apostle says, all order is from God.

ST. AUGUSTINE  
*De Ordine.*

## 117.—On Penance as a Virtue.

BOURDALOUE.

“ I chastise my body and bring it into subjection : lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.”—1 CORINTHIANS ix. 27.

IT is an excellent axiom, on which we do not sufficiently reflect, and which nevertheless ought to be the chief subject of our gratitude to God, that the same things which have perverted us are (if we wish) those which should sanctify us, and that, by a wonderful effect of grace and love, we, without going out of our way, find a remedy for our ills in the very instruments which have contributed to bring them on.

It is this idea that St. Paul conceived, when, reasoning on this principle, he explains to the Romans what is the essence of Christian penance, saying: “ Neither yield ye your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin; but present yourself to God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of justice unto God ” (*Rom.* vi. 13).

As you have yielded your members to commit sins of iniquity, you must make use of them as instruments of justice in order to lead a holy life; for it is by doing so, that your conversion will appear to be sincere. If what was in you as an instrument of sin becomes a means of penance, if what you have defiled when you were a slave to the world, you consecrate it to the service of Almighty God,

and make of your members a victim and holocaust worthy of His justice.

This is the way by which you can discern the difference between true and false penance.

As it is effeminacy and sensuality which have withdrawn you from God, you must, if you wish to make friends with Him, counteract these by a severe penance. And to effect this, your penance must be persevering as well as severe. Why? Because God leaves it to yourselves; your penance must therefore annihilate your self-love, and that can only be done by the zeal of a holy and rigorous punishment. If it were a question of condemning others, and of judging of their shortcomings, what a severe penance would you award them; and when it applies to your own bodies, of which you are so fond, and for which you have nought but delicate tenderness, what severity ought you not to exercise; and if you do not do so, what injustice will you not commit?

Have we not very often fancied that faults, which appear to us so small when we ourselves commit them, are magnified in our own eyes when committed by others, and that which we took for an atom, becomes a monstrous sin in our neighbour? What is the cause of this? Why, nothing but self-love. Oh! how should we fight against this? Only by severe penance.

We even love our vices, we make a virtue of them, and what is insupportable in others, is sweet and agreeable to ourselves. However, penance must destroy all this. However selfish we may be, we must not be corrupt judges; and in order not to be so, we must judge ourselves and punish ourselves severely.

It is a delusion, at all times fostered and encouraged by an effeminate world, to imagine that penance should be a virtue solely interior, and that it should reign only over the spiritual powers of the soul; that the heart should

be simply changed, that a careful watch should be kept over our passions, and that all these could be solidly practised without our flesh feeling the effects, or without inflicting pain on that exterior and worldly man, which forms part of ourselves.

If that were the case, says St. Chrysostom, we must curtail entire chapters of Holy Scripture, in which the Holy Ghost upsets carnal prudence by testimonies, as contrary to our self-love, as truth is opposed to error.

It might also be said that St. Paul did not take that worldly view, or that he thought lightly of Christian penance, when he taught that we should make living hostages of our bodies—*Exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem*—when he wished that this virtue should extend to the chastising of the flesh, when he commanded the faithful, or rather when he made a law for them, to bear really on their bodies the mortification of Jesus Christ; and finally, to give them an example, he himself chastised his body, and bringing it under subjection, fearing, added he, lest perhaps when he preached penance to others, and not practising it, he himself should become a castaway.

“But I chastise my body and bring it under subjection; lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway” (1 *Corinthians* ix. 27).

. . . . .

Sin must be punished either in the present world or in the world to come, either by the justice of God or by the penitence of man, let us not therefore wait till God Himself shall inflict due punishment. Let us take care to prevent the rigour of His justice by the rigour of our penance. Inflamed with zeal, let us side with the Almighty against ourselves, and avenge His cause at our own expense.

BOURDALOUE.  
*Sermon on St. Magdalen.*

## 118.—On Perseverance.

PÈRES ANTOINE DE LA PORTE, CROIZET, and  
ST. PHILIP NERI.

“He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.”

—MATTHEW x. 22.

THERE are two grand motives for perseverance.

The first is, that we cannot begin too soon to serve God, and as that beginning is never too late, we ought never to relax in our duty to Him, so long as we live.

We ought, indeed, to love GóD, from the first moment of our coming to the use of reason; we ought to love Him as soon as we have known Him, and this is perhaps the reason that the best part of our life slips by, without beginning to do good, and without engaging to serve Him, and this, too, after the Sacrament of Baptism, which is, as you know, a solemn promise to serve and love Him, our Divine Master.

We, by rights, ought never to have relaxed, but ought to have kept faithfully to the promise made in the sight of heaven and earth; but by a desertion as shameful as it is criminal, we soon find that we have been more guilty than reasonable, from the very first moment of our existence. Is it not just, then, to make up for lost time, or at least to make reparation for time so uselessly employed, that we should consecrate the rest of our lives, in paying off a debt which is owing to Him, our Creator?

We ought, at least, to enter into the feelings of the great St. Augustine, who exclaims, “Too late have I known Thee, O ancient Truth, too late have I loved Thee,

O ancient Beauty!" Ah! had I waited for a year, a month, a week, or a day, would it not have been too late for me to begin?

What can I then now do, but to devote the remainder of my life to Thy service? You have loved me, dear Lord, from all eternity; you will love me for all eternity, if I am fortunate enough to deserve the eternal happiness which Thou hast destined for me; at least if that short interval which hangs between these two eternities, be perseveringly, and constantly employed, in loving and serving Thee.

The other motive is, that we should never be weary of serving God, or quit His holy service too soon. For, tell me, what has moved that soul when, with Christian generosity, it has resolved to leave off sinning, and has determined to be virtuous and good? It is either the fear of God's judgments, or the wish to be saved, or perhaps a higher motive has been excited, and conversion has lasted for some time.

But this desirable change ceases, tears are dried up, and the course of penitential prayers are stopped.

The goodness, justice, and mercy of God had brought forth our holy resolutions. Have these been the cause of this change? No! God is now just as loving, just as merciful as He ever was. He has not ceased to be mindful of you; why, then, did you not remain longer in His service?

If, then, the fervent zeal which we should always feel in the service of His Divine Majesty should cease for a day, or even a moment, it would be too late, because there is not a single day or hour which should not be devoted to the adoration and service of Almighty God. We should not, therefore, place any limit to our perseverance; for the very moment we cease to be zealous and good, all our

past services are reckoned as nothing, and we lose the merit of them.

LE PÈRE ANTOINE DE ST. MARTIN DE LA PORTE.  
*From his book on Grace.*

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Having considered the motives that ought to induce us to persevere, let us see the sad effects that would inevitably result from the want of perseverance.

Consider well, that as perseverance in the life of grace is purely a gift of God, so the want of perseverance is simply our own fault. That life of grace which penance renews in us is of its nature as immortal, and as incorruptible as is our soul. If, therefore, against the design of God, we lose this grace, it is to ourselves, and not to grace, that we can attribute this loss, and in that consists our irregularity.

Instructed, as we have been, of the necessity of final perseverance, why should we not always try to merit it? Ought we not daily resolve to obtain this precious treasure?

Final perseverance, ought it not to be the constant object of our desires, the aim of all our endeavours, and the motive, so to speak, of all our prayers? Let us store up all our merits; let us multiply our graces; for if we have the misfortune of not persevering to the end, if we have the unhappiness of dying in mortal sin, notwithstanding our former innocence and fervour of penance, if we have the misfortune of losing that grace at that moment preceding the last, all these treasures will be lost for all eternity; God, in this case, does not reckon up our past good deeds. We are justly condemned. Oh! how blind, how mad must we be not to ask of Almighty God for the gift of perseverance, and for the means of obtaining this grace!

It is in reality this gift which gives such a value to our good works. Without perseverance, the most perfect inno-

cence, the most heroic virtue, the most austere penance, go for nothing.

Saul had been chosen by God by a singular favour; Solomon had been the admiration of the world for his piety and wisdom; Judas was one of our Saviour's apostles, and had even worked miracles; Origen was once ready to shed his blood for Christ's sake; Tertullian had been one of the Fathers of the Church for a long time; all these men had begun well, all these glorious lights had illuminated the Church for several years; they had, even for some time, persevered in innocence, fervour, and in all the duties of a Christian life. They reflected honour on religion so long as they persevered in grace. But having at last been seduced from the exact regularity of their duties, having allowed themselves to be led captive by their bad passions, having too easily followed the bad example of others—what has been their sad end, and what is their eternal destiny?

LE PÈRE CROISSET, S.J.  
*Exercises of Piety.*

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The greatest help to perseverance in the spiritual life is the habit of prayer, especially under the direction of our confessor.

Men should often renew their good resolutions, and not lose heart because they are tempted against them.

ST. PHILIP NERI.



## 119.—On Piety and Devotion.

PÈRE CROIZET and ST. BERNARD.

"God is a Spirit, and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth."—JOHN iv. 24.

AS soon as one takes the firm resolution of serving God, or, what is the same thing, as soon as one begins to practise devotion, that one is mild, tractable, humble, upright, obliging, and tries to fulfil every obligation of his state of life.

There can be no stability in friendship, no good faith in business, no candour in courtesy, if it be not well-grounded in goodness and piety. Piety gives us common sense; candour, earnestness and uprightness.

True devotion consists in fulfilling the minutest duties of that state of life to which God has called us. There are so many obligations in business, society, and divers employments of life! Nothing more praiseworthy than trying to do everything in a satisfactory manner, and what more satisfactory than the constant practice of devotion? Take a survey of the various states of life.

Who is a good father, a good judge, a kind relation, a sincere friend, a loyal subject? What woman more domesticated, what servant more industrious, what workman more hard-working, what priest more exemplary and watchful, than he who is a religious observer of God's commandments?

All these virtues are the fruit of Christian piety and devotion.

Neither God nor the Gospel disapproves of the duties of politeness nor the amenities of life. God regulates them. He does not command Christians to live solitary lives in a desert, but He expects them to conduct themselves as good Christians. Thus, far from making people savage and morose, nothing is more likely to civilise and polish them than piety and devotion. We see examples of this daily.

If a man be debauched and sensual, he is irritable, unbearable, peevish, rough, passionate, and vindictive, in fact only fit to try the patience of others. Let a woman be without piety, she is vain, capricious, cruel, and hard to her children and servants, and a heavy cross to her husband. But when such as these put on the armour of piety and devotion, they become reasonable, courteous, gracious to all, diligent in work, respectable in society, and worthy of the esteem and veneration of the world.

How sad it is, O Lord, to hear of devout people, that is to say, those who live according to the precepts of the Gospel, how sad to hear that they are peevish, uncivil, troublesome, and that they think that they are good for nothing! What! cannot one be good for something in this world, without giving up devotion?

True piety and devotion does not prevent our mixing in society, neither do they forbid amusements, provided they be innocent.

More than that, does the Gospel forbid us from keeping a careful watch over our own property, or even to work hard, so as to increase it by lawful means? Does the Church condemn the care of providing for your family, of taking an interest in the temporal welfare of your children, of cultivating your own land, or of keeping up your dignity and honour? Does it forbid you to perform the ordinary usages of polite society? Does it even consider harmless recreation a crime, or an attire suitable for your rank or

station? Certainly not! it only condemns excess, covetousness, or a too great eagerness.

PÈRE CROISSET, S.J.  
*Reflections Chrétiennes.*

Would you wish to know if you are really devout? Then take heed of what you love, what you fear, wherefore you rejoice, or why you sorrow. Love God alone, or if you love, love the object, for His sake. Fear only to displease God, or if you have any dread of anything, refer all to Him. Rejoice only in God, or if you rejoice in any other object, look upon it only as an attraction which draws you closer to Him. Let the loss of God be your only sorrow, whether your sorrow is occasioned by past sins or by those of your brethren; or if any other loss worries you, look upon it as a proof that He intends to chasten you, in order to make you more united to Him.

The grace of true devotion is an unction, which instructs us in all our duties; he alone knows it who has proved it by experience, and he who is wilfully ignorant of this cannot possibly know it, because no one can feel it but he who has received it as a precious gift from heaven.

Devotion is the grace that influences the heart, and that alone. After one has tasted the joys of the Spirit, those of the world and the flesh seem to be distasteful. He who yearns for the blessings of heaven cannot relish earthly pleasures, and he who sighs after eternal things, will only feel a contempt for fleeting things.

ST. BERNARD.  
*De Verbis Apostol.*

It is well to choose some one good devotion, and to stick to it, and never to abandon it.

ST. PHILIP NERI.

## 120.—On Poverty and the Poor in Spirit.

FATHERS SARRAZIN, FABER, and ST. BERNARD.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

—MATTHEW V. 3.

IT is the grandest miracle of grace to see a man poor, in the midst of riches. We could not understand this miracle if we did not know that Holy Scripture does not condemn riches, or the rich, but only those who love riches, and those who wish to possess wealth.

The Apostle teaches us this truth, when he says, that it is not the rich, but only those who yearn to become rich, who fall into the snares of the devil.

St. Hilary well explains this by saying, that it is not a sin to possess property, but it is a sin if it be not used in moderation. Thus, when the Gospel curses the rich, and closes the gates of heaven upon them, it does not curse those who possess riches, but those who wish to be rich, and those who are eager to amass wealth.

This is the meaning of the Apostle's words, and it is indisputable, that the love of those blessings we call riches is bad ; it follows, then, that the poverty which the Gospel commends, is not the absence of riches, but the wish to acquire riches, or the desire to love them, when possessed.

The wise man depicts admirably this effect of grace by these words : “One is as it were rich, when he hath nothing ; and another is, as it were poor, when he hath great riches” (*Prov.* xiii. 7). How can we understand, and could we possibly have any idea of a rich man having nothing, or of

a poor man being rich, if we did not know that, by the grace of Jesus Christ, the poor man lives as if he was rich, and the rich man lives as if he was poor.

Behold, then, the miracle of the Gospel and its grace; that the rich may be as poor, as was our Saviour in His riches, since He was the Master of the universe, but was clothed in poverty.

A Christian should die poor, either in reality or in spirit, because poverty can only enter into heaven, and if the rich enter therein, it must be through the gate of poverty. Thus, the greatest misfortune is to die rich, that is to say, with a love and an attachment to riches. This is necessary to repeat often to the rich, in order that they may not deceive themselves or be deceived; and they must be warned, that poverty is the sole inheritance to gain heaven, and that the rich can only be saved through poverty.

This truth ought to make the rich and the powerful tremble and fear; not because they can open the gates of heaven by making themselves poor, but on account of the difficulty there is of being poor in spirit in the midst of riches, of cheerfully resigning something, from the superfluity of wealth, of loving poverty, when they are rich.

This miracle is not impossible to grace; but it will never be accomplished, except through a contempt for riches, looking upon its acquisition in its true light, valuing it as it should be, that is, its being of little or no good.

FATHER SARRAZIN.  
*Advent Sermon.*

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Poverty has been called by some, the sister of Christ, by others, His bride. It would seem as if the circumstances of His infancy had been providentially contrived with a view to bringing us as many of the incidents of poverty as were possible, without seeming to be unnatural. From Nazareth

to Bethlehem, from Bethlehem over the wilderness to Egypt, from Egypt to Nazareth again, and from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the three days He begged His bread; the biography of His childhood spreads itself like an ample net, to entangle in its folds more and more of the varieties and pressures of His beloved poverty.

If He was born of a royal maiden, it was of one who was poor and reduced in circumstances. He would not be born at home, but took the occasion of the Roman census, to be as it were a child of exile, and a waif upon His own earth.

He would be rejected from the doors of Bethlehem, as the least worthy of all the mixed multitude that had crowded thither. He would be born in a cave, a stable, amidst the domestic animals of man's husbandry.

When age grew on Joseph and his infirmities multiplied, the yoke of poverty became yet more galling to the shoulders of his tender Foster-son.

The poverty that pressed on Mary, pressed tenfold more heavily on Him, from the very fact of its having first pressed on her.

Never was there a childhood of hardier poverty than our Blessed Lord's. It was His inseparable companion, and if He loved its austerities with so singular a love, it was only because they were so singular a cross.

FATHER FABER (Orat.)  
*Bethlehem.*

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Poverty in itself is not a virtue; but the love of poverty is so. Jesus Christ has said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," not those who possess nothing.

ST. BERNARD.

## 121.—On Prayer.

SS. FRANCIS DE SALES, AUGUSTINE,  
PHILIP NERI, and FENELON.

“Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.”—HEBREWS iv. 16.

PRAYER places our understanding in the brightness and light of God, and exposes our will to the heat of heavenly love. There is nothing that so effectually purges our understanding from its ignorance, or our will from its depraved affections, as prayer. It is the water of benediction, which makes the plants of our good desires grow green and flourish. It washes our souls from their imperfections, and quenches the thirst of passion in our hearts.

But, above all, I recommend to you mental and cordial prayer, and particularly that which has the life and passion of our Lord for its object. By making Him the subject of your meditation, your whole soul will be replenished with Him; you shall learn His carriage, and frame all your actions to the model of His.

As He is the light of the world, it is then in Him, by Him, and for Him, that we ought to acquire lustre and be enlightened. He is the tree of desire, under whose shadow we ought to refresh ourselves. He is the living fountain of Jacob, in which we may wash away all our stains. In fine, as little children, by hearing their mothers talk, lisp at first and learn at length to speak their language, so we, by keeping close to our Saviour by meditation, and observing His words, actions, and affections, shall, by the

help of His grace, learn to speak, to act, and to will like Him.

Here we must stop, as we cannot find access to God the Father but through this gate; for as the looking-glass could never terminate our sight, if its back were not tinned or leaded, so we could never contemplate the Divinity in this world had we not been united to the sacred humanity of our Saviour, whose life and death is the most fit, delightful, sweet, and profitable object we can choose for our ordinary meditation.

It is not without reason that our Saviour called Himself the bread that came down from heaven; for as bread ought to be eaten with all sorts of meat, so our Saviour ought to be the subject of our meditation, consideration and imitation in all our prayers and actions.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

*Devout Life.*

. . . . .

God listens, says St. Cyprian, to the voice of the heart, in preference to the voice of the mouth; we must, adds he, watch and give up our mind to prayer; we must drive away all worldly and profane thoughts from our heart, in order that our mind and soul may be engrossed with our petitions.

To whom, continues the Saint, should we speak attentively, if not to God. Can He ask for less, than that you should think of what you are saying? How dare you expect that He will deign to hear you, if you think only of yourselves. You fancy that God will hear you when you pray; you who are so wilfully distracted in prayer. Far from pleasing Him, you offend His divine Majesty by your negligence, in an action which is the only way of gaining favours from heaven.

We must ask in faith, nothing wavering, says St. James, and this faith ought to be so firm that we should never



hesitate, for he who hesitates or wavers is like unto the waves of the sea, ever moved and carried about by the wind. He who, then, continues he, prays without this confidence, must not expect to be heard. And what more capable of moving the heart of our Lord in our regard, than a firm confidence in His mercy? Can He refuse those who have placed all their treasure in Him, those who have trusted in His goodness?

When we pray with confidence, says St. Cyprian, it is God Himself who implants in our hearts that spirit of prayer. The Eternal Father must, then, acknowledge the words of His only-begotten Son when we pronounce them, and He who dwells in the bottom of our hearts will regulate and fashion all our prayers.

We must not, says St. Bernard, mingle in our prayers foolish things with the true, temporal with the eternal, low interests with those of our salvation.

To pray well, says St. Augustine, you must seek God alone; to ask, through Him, for other blessings, is praying badly. Do not seek to make God the protector of your self-love, or of your ambition, but the executor of your good desires. You have recourse to God, to curb your passions, and often He sends you crosses, of which He knows you stand in need. When He loves you, continues the holy Doctor, He refuses what your self-love asks for, and in His anger, He gives you that which is dangerous for you to obtain. Do not carry to the sanctuary of the altar indiscreet vows, ill-regulated desires, and slovenly prayers. Ask for nothing but what is worthy of Him to whom you pray. Keep strictly from sighing after vain and hurtful benefits; ask for the dew from heaven, and not for the fat of the land. Open your heart before the Lord, in order that His Holy Spirit may dwell in you, and ask, through sighs and moans, for the true blessings which He wishes that you should ask for.

Let us pray, my brethren, but let us ever pray, keeping a watchful eye over our various duties. Do not let us offer up exalted or abstract prayers, or those which have no reference to the practice of every virtue. Let us pray, not to become more enlightened, and more spiritual in words; but to become more humble, more docile, more patient, more modest, more charitable, more pure and more unselfish in every detail of our conduct. Without that, our assiduity in prayer, far from being efficacious and fruitful, will be a delusion and a scandal for our neighbour.

Full of delusion! how many examples have we not had? How many have we seen, whose prayers tend to swell their pride, and lead their thoughts astray. Of scandal to our neighbour; for is there anything more scandalous than to see a person who prays without first correcting himself; who, at the end of his devotions, is not less frivolous, less vain, less restless, less passionate, less selfish than before?

FENELON.  
*Select Sermons.*

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When you ask for temporal favours, however trifling they may appear, ask with fear. Pray that God may grant or reject them, as He thinks fit. The doctor, and not the patient, is best able to judge what is best.

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*De Verb : Domini.*

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A man without prayer is an animal without the use of reason.

ST. PHILIP NERI.

## 122.—On Predestination.

PÈRES HOUDRY and CROISSET.

“And whom he predestinated, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”—ROMANS viii. 33.

PREDESTINATION, properly speaking, is that particular arrangement and conduct, which God makes use of, to guide gently and freely to their end, those whom He has chosen, from all eternity to enjoy everlasting happiness. Or, as St. Thomas expresses it in fewer words, it is an arrangement prepared in the mind of God, respecting the leading of the reasonable creature to eternal life. This is tantamount to the definition given by St. Augustine: *Præscientia et preparatio beneficiorum Dei, quibus certissime liberantur quicumque liberantur* ; it is the foreknowledge and the preparation of the blessings and favours of God, which do not fail to lead the elect to everlasting happiness.

It follows, from this definition that predestination is a part of the Providence of God, and that the office of predestination, as also that of Providence, is to direct the means to the end, or even to choose and prepare the means proper for the end.

But, as it is certain, according to the articles of faith, that man has been created to obtain supernatural beatitude, he must have the means proportionate as well as supernatural ; and as these means are in God, who has the will to give them, it follows that there is in God a predestination. It follows, in the second place, that the predestination in God is an act of His judgment, by which He

foresees the force of the infallible means which lead to the end to which He destined the elect: *Præscientia et præparatio*.

It is, moreover, an act of His will by which He resolves to give to each such and such of those infallible means. As predestination is an act of the Divine understanding, it must necessarily follow, that it should be an act of prudence and infinite wisdom, which we should prefer above every human consideration.

Besides, as predestination may be said to be a selection which is an act of the will, we must conclude from thence, that it is infinitely just, and that it is accompanied by a Divine Holiness, and a very ardent love for the creature.

Finally, it follows that predestination is eternal, since it is an act of the judgment and will of God, which cannot change, and consequently is from all eternity; so that what is done at the time, happens only because God has determined it before time was; thus the grace is given in time, but the preparation was made from all eternity.

We must, moreover, conclude from this definition, acknowledged by all the Doctors of the Church, that predestination is certain and infallible; which certainly proceeds from the strength of Divine knowledge which cannot be deceived, and which extends to every free event which ought to happen, and not by the strength of the assistance which it gives us; for of themselves they are not infallible, since they can be prevented by man's free will, so that he could not concur in it. If this infallibility proceeded from the means, assistance, and graces, the creature would not co-operate freely, but necessarily, and consequently, predestination being certain and infallible, would have deprived us of our free will.

REV. PÈRE V. HOUDRY, S.J.

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"Many are called, but few are chosen." Even had faith

not taught us this awful truth, taking into consideration certain maxims of Holy Scripture in which all Christians agree, reason alone would suffice to convince us that the number of the elect must be small.

Instructed in the truths of our holy religion, knowing the duties of a Christian, convinced of our natural inclination to evil, seeing the licentiousness of the present age, can one come to the conclusion that there will be very many saved?

To be saved, we must necessarily live according to the maxims of the Gospel; and the number of those who now-a-days, do so live, can the number be called great?

To be saved, we must openly declare that we are disciples of our Saviour. Alas! how many are there now who would be ashamed to own it. We must renounce all we possess, if not in reality, at least in desire; we must carry our cross daily. What unchangeable purity! what delicacy of conscience! what humility! what honesty! what charity! With such outward signs as these, would you recognise many disciples of Jesus Christ? They are, however, the surest signs we can have of our predestination.

The world is the implacable enemy of Jesus our Saviour. It is not possible to serve two masters. Judge for yourself which of the two, the greater part obey and follow, and by that, you will be able to know how few, how very few, will be of the number of the elect.

LE PÈRE CROISSET.

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The fear of God is a sign of predestination.

ST. AUGUSTINE

## 123.—On Prudence.

ST. BASIL and PÈRE GIROUST.

"The knowledge of the holy, is prudence."

—PROVERBS ix. 10.

ON referring to Holy Scripture you will find many examples of the folly of those who trusted in worldly and political prudence.

Pharaoh had cleverly contrived to destroy the people of Israel, but he had not foreseen the obstacle which upset all his plans. An exposed child he intended to put to death was secretly nourished, and brought up in his own palace, and this same child destroyed all the power of the Egyptians and saved Israel.

Abimelech caused seventy of his brethren to be slain, in order to ascend the throne ; but he himself could not avoid meeting with a violent death, for he was killed by a portion of a millstone thrown by a woman.

The Jews conspired against our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; and after long consultations, they said to themselves : "What do we, for this man doth many miracles ? If we let Him alone so, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation" (*John xi. 48*). It was by reasoning thus, they resolved to put Jesus to death, in order to save their place and nation ; but this counsel, fatal as it was, ended in their entire destruction ; they have fallen into a miserable slavery, for they have neither law, nor religion, nor ceremonial.

ST. BASIL.

*Extract from his Sermons.*

As Christians, what better rules can we take for deciding prudently, than the eternal truths? Those precepts and maxims we ought to follow, in order that we may not swerve from the duty of considering the end for which we were created, and which should be continually before our eyes.

Oh! if we had always acted on this principle, if we had followed no other guide, if we had had them ever before our eyes, if we had weighed in this balance all our resolutions and designs (which we can now only trace to ourselves), our conclusions and decisions would have been correct and right. We should not have been subject to so many false proceedings, to so many falls, and we should not have been cast among so many rocks. God would have diffused His light to illuminate our path; He would have united His will to ours; faith would have given us a true esteem of things; He would have made us find out the true worth of His Word; He would have inspired us with a wisdom all divine, often even requisite in the management and administration of worldly business.

But what do we do? whom do we consult? We consult, alas! neither our Lord, nor His Gospel, nor our faith. It is a false and carnal prudence, a blind reasoning, which thinks that it can see everything, and can see nothing. We judge for ourselves; we wish to believe only in self, and on certain occasions, everything appears to favour our plans, and, full of confident success, we begin, we decide, and trust to chance.

Whom do we consult? It is the world—the world and its ideas; unhappy source of many delusions, of many specious delights, which lead us into error.

Whom do we consult? It is passion; it is an insatiable avarice which devours us, and which biasses us ever in the favour of self-aggrandisement; it is an inordinate ambition, which goads us onwards and drags us on to fortune;

it is a bitter resentment which animates us, and ever leans to the side of vengeance; it is a guilty attachment which binds us, and which makes us slaves to pleasure. These are our counsellors; these are our masters.

I know, says the Lord, how I can frustrate all your false and worldly plans; these will not only not succeed, but will lead to your ruin. I will confound the prudence of the age, and will leave them to their own guidance; I will let them walk in their darkness, and let them fall into abysses, from which they cannot extricate themselves.

We see and experience this daily. We undertake important affairs in which self is concerned; God, on His part, attaches thereto even a temporal punishment, for He upsets and destroys them all.

A thousand times wiser and happier is that Christian who examines everything as a Christian should do, who has recourse to God, and stores up resolutions to do all that God may be willing to dictate to him; taking care that all the precepts and maxims of the Gospel may be the rule of his life; applying these to everything; making a just discernment of what is allowed and what is forbidden; of what may be done and what to be avoided; seeking for advice from those learned in the law; making use of the commandments of God as a sure way of finding out all that His will may propose, and then by putting it into practice.

For the beauty of our faith and religion is, to have rules applicable to every state and condition of life in which we may be found, and there is not a single occasion or juncture which may not require us to act with a Christian prudence.

LE PÈRE GIROUST.  
*Advent Discourse.*



## 124.—On Purity and Chastity.

SS. ASTÈRE and AMBROSE.

‘The value of all gold, is as nothing compared to a soul truly chaste.’

—ECCLESIASTICUS xxvi. 20.

[ASTERIUS or ASTÈRE. Of this Saint, but little is known, except for the fact, that before he entered into the ecclesiastical state, he was a distinguished orator at the bar. He was raised to the See of Amassée, and his episcopal duties were accompanied with the practice of every virtue. He died at an advanced age, about the year 400. The Homilies that have been preserved and handed down to us, as written by him, are models of eloquence and piety.]

PURITY is a virtue which puts us on an equality with the angels. The purity of angels is more blessed, ours more generous. They have no temptations of the flesh to fight against, as we have.

We cannot preserve our chastity, surrounded as we are by so many enemies, without great exertion, and there are but few who are victorious.

Virginity brings us nearer to God. It seeks for a model in God Himself, says St. Ambrose, for the eternal Father is virgin and Father. God, also wishing to become Incarnate, willed that He should be born of a virgin. God has also an extraordinary love and tenderness for pure souls; it is to these, in particular, that He confers or reveals His secrets, or on whom He deigns to bestow His favours. Jesus Christ bestowed many graces on Peter, on account of his zeal; but it was the virgin St. John who was permitted to lean on the breast and heart of Jesus; it was he

who had the privilege of entering His divine sanctuary, and it was he from whom He hid none of His most important secrets.

Confessors, martyrs, and apostles have great privileges ; but it appears that to virgins only, He has entrusted the privilege of following the Lamb. They are His spouses, and thus this illustrious quality, gives them right of entry everywhere. .

Virginity is that precious treasure, to guard which, so many generous souls have sacrificed their lives. The preservation of this treasure is difficult, but the loss of it is irreparable ; one may recover grace when lost by sin, but virginity once lost, can never be restored.

Nevertheless, nothing is more easy to lose, and we so readily expose ourselves to lose this treasure, nay, it seems to me that we seek to lose it, and we even make a merit of losing that which ought to be a subject of the most poignant grief.

The demon of impurity, wishing to gain a victory over a person who is modest, and has the fear of God before her eyes, uses nearly the same tactics as a skilful general would use ; for he, despairing of capturing a city by storm, employs secret emissaries or spies. Thus, the devil makes use of certain propensities which appear innocent enough, or at least but little suspected of having any secret connection with him. Making sure of the interest these evil propensities excite, the devil will enter secretly into their hearts, undermine and eventually make himself master of the citadel.

These propensities (so nearly allied to passions) are vanity, curiosity, and presumption ; seemingly these three have but little connection with impurity. But these are the weapons which the devil makes use of in the world, and they will soon conquer chastity.

The passion which does not appear to be allied to the

sin of impurity, but which nevertheless enters deep into the heart, is that curiosity which prompts the reading of bad or dangerous books. Nothing more dreadful, nothing more injurious to the purity of young persons than those novels and books of gallantry, which, under the pretext of elegance of diction or beauty of language, corrupt the educated mind.

If such reading forms the mind, it spoils the soul; if it gives us a knowledge of the world, it destroys Christianity; and thus, by the loss of devotion, by the loss of the holy fear of God, and purity of conscience, such reading leads insensibly to the loss of chastity.

ST. ASTÈRE.  
*Homily.*

. . . . .

Show me the man who is able to explain or understand the value and excellence of purity, a virtue beyond all the common laws of nature. It is on earth a perfect type, and a lively picture of the virginal purity which reigns in heaven.

It is that which has passed through air, clouds, and stars, and which, soaring above the angels, has found the Divine Word in the bosom of His Father, and has drawn Him to earth, to be united to it in an inexpressible manner.

Now, after having been so fortunate as to find a pearl of so great a price, on what plea can we allow it to be lost? Nevertheless, it is not I, but the Son of God Himself, who assures us that the pure and chaste, will be like unto the angels in heaven; and at this, we need not be astonished if such souls are placed in the rank of angels, souls who have for their spouse, the King and Lord of angels.

ST. AMBROSE

## 125.—On Religion and the Religious State.

BOURDALOUE, PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE,  
and ST. BERNARD.

“Walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”—COLOSSIANS i. 10.

THERE is no one who ought to be vainglorious for having bid adieu to the world; he ought rather to return thanks to Almighty God. St. Athanasius said as much to his disciples: *Nemo qui reliquerit mundum, gloriatur.*

I would have here the right to use the same phrase. Do not let us feel proud at what we have done for God when we entered into the religious state, but let us praise and bless Him a thousand times for having done so much for us.

In consecrating ourselves to the Lord, we have parted with blessings but they are benefits which, when possessed, are a heavy burden: so says our Lord. For Holy Writ, does it not mention that it is a sin to be attached to the goods of this world, or to be grieved at their loss?

We resign benefits which cannot be retained, without being overwhelmed with their burthen; blessings, which cannot be loved, without our being soiled with avarice; benefits, which we cannot lose or fear to lose, without being anxious about their probable future loss. St. Bernard expresses this in the following short sentence: *Bona quæ possessa onerunt, amata inquinant, amissa cruciant.*

Thus it is a grace and a blessing, which God has inspired us with the will to deny and conquer ourselves; and when

I ponder on all the truths which faith teaches, what conclusion can I come to, but that I am forced to be astonished at the sight of that wondrous grace, which God has bestowed upon me, when He called me to the religious life.

A state of life, which spares me so much trouble, which protects me from so many dangers, which compels me to offer unlimited thanks for that singular mercy of my Lord, who has induced me to embrace a vocation, which is not only the most perfect, the safest, but also the most easy and the most favourable, to the work of my own sanctification.

For, do not let ourselves be deceived; it is more easy to be deprived of worldly wealth, as we are, than to possess riches, and not become attached to them. It is more easy to give up the pleasures of the world, than to use them as if we used them not—than to be in the midst of honours and distinctions, and not be elated with them.

It is much more easy to submit to the will of another, than to keep our own liberty and free-will within bounds. To make use of the world as if we used it not, is what every Christian is obliged to do; but who are those who do this?

To possess temporal goods as if they possessed them not, is a condition attached to all who wish to be saved; but, tell me, where can we find people in the world who are of this opinion?

“What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?” (*Ps. cxvi.*) Ah! Lord, ought we not say, You have broken my bonds with the world?—*Dirupisti vincula mea*; and it is for that I will sacrifice to you the sacrifice of praise; and I will call upon the Name of the Lord, and incessantly invoke Your holy Name. It is for that, that prostrate at the foot of Your altar, I am resolved to begin to make a sacrifice of myself. What can I not do from henceforth, without delay? Have I not

the strength to deprive myself of that fatal liberty, which can only lead me to some other object besides Thee?

But You wish me to go further than this; that I should unite myself to You, by indissoluble bonds, after having put myself to the test. Give me the consolation of being able to do, with a hearty good-will, all that is permissive, and to say with heartfelt gladness, "I will pay my vows to the Lord in the sight of all His people."

For thus I can return love for love, sacrifice for sacrifice. I shall have the advantage of being able to spare nothing for You, who have spared nothing for me; in fine, to be His victim, as He has been mine.

BOURDALOUE.

*Sermon for a Profession.*

. . . . .

But, my dear brethren, while so many holy daughters of the Church are about to resign all earthly ties, whilst they, by day and night, will try to please their Creator, what shall we do for our salvation? Shall we continue to live in that frightful negligence and ingratitude to God—in our forgetfulness of death and eternity?

Who would believe it! To see on one side their fear and vigilance, and on the other side, our carelessness and idleness.

That young girl, buried, as it were, in a cloister, thinks herself fortunate if she can, after a seclusion of several years, prepare for herself a happy death; whilst that other worldly girl, is busying herself with the pleasures of this life, and, perhaps, has never thought seriously of death or eternity.

That young man deprives himself of everything, as if he had only a moment to live, whilst that one, only thinks of hoarding up, and multiplying riches, as if he could live for ever. The one passes his life in mortification, the other in pleasure.

What can one say to this? Are there two paths to heaven, one broad, the other narrow? Is it, that paradise is given to some for doing nothing, and is only reached by others, at the sacrifice of their blood?

You will tell me, we are not all religious, all monks, or nuns. This is true, and it is that very thing which astonishes me most. For what obligation has this person to bid adieu to the world? what has led her to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, if not to lead you, and others, to do likewise?

PÈRE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.

. . . . .

Oh, how safe is a holy religious! The man lives there in innocence and purity, he seldom falls, he often is the recipient of heavenly blessings, he tastes a sweet tranquillity, and when he dies, he breathes out his last sigh, full of hope and full of love for his Redeemer. His purgatory is over sooner, and his reward is plentiful. What he leaves behind are but worldly possessions, transitory and of very little value, and those he aspires to are infinite.

I say more than this, and what I say is true: he exchanges darkness for light; from a stormy sea, he anchors in a safe harbour; freed from a wretched slavery, he sighs after a happy freedom; and finally, he passes from death to a life of everlasting bliss.

ST. BERNARD.  
*Epistle xiv.*

## 126.—On Retreats.

ST. EPHREM, PÈRE LE VALOIS,  
and ST. GREGORY.

“ I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness : and I will speak to her heart.”—*OSÉE* ii. 14.

[ST. EPHREM was the son of a husbandman of Nisibe, and in early youth, indulged in the practice of all the shameful vices of a barbarous age. Through the mercy of God, he reflected on the sad state of his soul, and withdrew to the desert, there to weep for his sins. Here he practised every austerity, and mortified his body with fastings and watchings. Ephrem did not, however, always remain in solitude, for we read of his going to Edessa, and there he was raised to the rank of Deacon. His ordination so inflamed his zeal, that it is related, that afterwards he preached with as much ease as eloquence. Like the Apostles, he now taught, that of which he was before so ignorant. The poor looked upon him as their father, and the monks came to him for direction. After a time of famine, when he did all he could do to comfort the stricken, he retired to his solitary cell, and therein died, about the year 379. St. Ephrem wrote several works in Syriac ; these were afterwards translated into Latin and Greek, and published in Rome in 1746, under the superintendence of Cardinal Quirini.]

O SOLITUDE! ladder of heaven, mother of contrition, mirror wherein we see our sins reflected, source of sweetness, companion of humility and of the fear of God, light of the soul ! O solitude, which teaches us to know our thoughts, to discern the promptings of our heart, which is the foundation of salvation, the curb of intemperance, the school of prayer, the peace of mind, the agreeable yoke, the light burden ! O solitude, effectual remedy against temptation, the enemy of imprudence, the joy of the soul,



the guardian of the eyes, ears, tongue, and the co-operatrix of every virtue. The friend of poverty, the fertile field of all good fruits, the wall and rampart of all those who wish to fight for the kingdom of heaven.

ST. EPHREM.

. . . . .

Withdraw from the crowd and the noise, come and seek for God in solitude.

It is God who calls those, who wish to speak to Him, it is an appointment He Himself has made. Go into retreat, and He will find you out; there He will speak to your mind and heart, and He will condescendingly be glad to confer with you every time you hopefully trust in Him. He will speak a language which, perchance, you never heard before, and you will listen for the first time, and you will hear Him henceforth, with consolation and with joy. You will learn truths without number, which you will be surprised you never heard before. You will become indifferent to things, which before interested you, and you will take as much care in fulfilling the duties of a Christian, as you formerly did in not thinking of duty at all.

I do not now urge you to quit the world, and spend the remainder of your life in solitude; this is devoutly to be wished for, and would be the surest way to secure your salvation; but your state of life does not allow of this, and if I were to ask as much, I fear that you would not acquiesce in my request. On the other hand, a retreat of one hour or even a day is not sufficient, you must give to God the time to speak to you, you must give yourself the time to listen to what He says, to understand what He will reveal to you; to implore Him to sanctify your will and intellect, so that you may be able to resist temptations, which have not hitherto been resisted. And for this, you are asked to devote a week. I dare to say, and I prophesy, that you

will find in this retreat, as did the Israelites in the desert, a column of fire to enlighten your darkness, and a column of cloud to defend you from the false glitter of the world, and to hinder you from being dazzled.

God will be your guide as He was theirs, He will conduct you, as He conducted them, He will nourish you, as He did them, with the bread of angels, and as He led them up to the mountain of His sanctification, so He will lead you, if only you have the courage to follow Him, and will make you saints.

Perhaps, however, you will tell me that a retreat, of which I have been speaking, is a recent invention, a new practice, of which you have never heard speak. You have always had an affection for antiquity in all things, but more especially, in matters relating to religion and devotion; you have always avoided show and singularity; but I fancy that I hear you say, that it would be absurd to alter our usual behaviour at our time of life; it is too late to begin to despise the world altogether; we can save our souls without going into retreat, and we must try to do so.

What! my brethren, is it a recent invention to do what the Son of God and His Apostles have practised; of which they have given us so many examples? Read the history of the Church, and you will see that retreats have always been the practice of the saints.

St. Gregory of Nazianzen went into retreat immediately after he was consecrated, and he made so long a retreat, that, on his return, he publicly apologised to his flock. You know the long retreat that St. Jerome made; and that St. Augustine entered into retreat more than once, and the earnest entreaties which he made to Valerius, his bishop, to allow him to make one about every two months. Then, coming to our last centuries, we find that the glorious Archbishop of Milan, St. Charles Borromeo, recommended all the clergy of his diocese to make four retreats

before he ordained them priests; and no year passed without his going into retreat, and very often he made two retreats in the year. I need not speak to you of St. Philip Neri, St. Francis of Sales, St. Francis Borgia, and a number of others, who were sanctified by these means.

Is it not written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 *Peter* i. 16), and again, "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Matt.* v. 48).

But do you believe it to be possible to reach perfection, without making a retreat? Have you ever seen or heard of persons being made holy by frequenting balls, assemblies, or by mixing with the noise, bustle, and intrigues of the world? Is it in such places as these that God has been accustomed to shower down His special graces? Ah! if we wish to receive His sanctifying grace, we must be in a position to profit by it.

LE PÈRE LE VALOIS.

*Extracts from a dozen Letters on the necessity of making occasional Retreats.*

. . . . .

It is necessary to seek occasionally for a spot, where you can be free from the worry and bustle of temporal affairs; a place wherein God is alone with you, and you alone with God.

"Enter, you and your family into the ark" (*Gen.* vii.) It is as if the Lord had said to the just man, Enter into thyself and meditate, thou wilt there find salvation; a deluge is to be dreaded outside the ark, for there is danger around.

ST. GREGORY.

*On Book of Kings.*

## 127.—On Riches.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM, MASSILLON,  
and ST. BASIL.

“Riches are good to him that hath no sin in his conscience.”

—ECCLESIASTICUS xiii. 30.

THE love of riches is far more pernicious and more powerful than the devil himself, and many obey this love more blindly than the pagans, who put their faith in idols. For there have been many pagans, who did not obey their devilish idols at all times, but people, who hanker after riches, unreservedly respect everything that tends to feed their covetousness; as if covetousness said to them: “Be revenged on society, forget the feelings of nature, despise God.” They obey this to the letter.

To the idols were sacrificed animals, but covetousness seeks to force their worshippers to sacrifice their own souls, and they sacrifice these without remorse. If you despise worldly blessings, you will be more worthy to possess heavenly blessings.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

*From Homily No. 64 on St. John.*

. . . . .

Poverty is not of itself holy, neither are riches criminal, says St. Ambrose.

You may occasionally have seen poor people, overwhelmed by the weight of their misery, grumble and rebel against the dispensations of Divine Providence, but you may also have seen some rich, who are not dazzled with their gold, who possess property as if they possessed it not.

If riches are a sword in the hands of the foolish, "the crown of the wise is their riches" (*Prov.* xix.)

If riches in the hands of prodigals and misers cause them to heap iniquity on iniquity, they are in the hands of the just and prudent a source of merit. But alas! where shall we find that just and prudent man, or rather where is he, who has not bent his knee before the idol of the world and fortune?

Let us seek among all the rich for one, who has not made a god of his gold, who has not believed that riches are all his strength, and who, charmed with his treasures, has not said to the precious metal, You are my confiding hope, and you are the tender object of my love; you are my crowning desire, and the end of my labours.

It must be confessed that a poor man is more likely to be honest and virtuous than a rich man. It is a rare thing to see a rich and virtuous individual combined. It is very difficult to be good and pious in the midst of riches, and more difficult to be saved in the midst of wealth and plenty: "For they that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snares of the devil," says the great Apostle (*Tim.* vi. 9).

Temptation follows those who wish to acquire riches, because to gain their end they do not hesitate to employ fraud, injustice, theft, perjury, and homicide, in fact, they make use of every vice to satisfy their cravings.

One sees that in every condition of life crime is the willing attendant on those who inordinately desire to be rich: the shop of the merchant is full of snares, to tempt and deceive the purchaser; the judge is tempted to deprive the widow of her field, and the magistrate eagerly gives his warrant, when there is a question of money accruing to him; the poor child, tired of being the son of poor parents, employs every artifice, just or unjust, to accumulate a fortune; and the rich child, tired of being the son of

a rich father, becomes a cruel parricide, in order to inherit and possess all his property.

The lover of wealth, says the wise man, despises every commandment: "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money" (*Eccles. x. 10*).

Show me the wisest woman, if once the love of gold and silver enters into her heart—Ah! she will soon be corrupted, and Solomon will be right in saying, that he could not find a strong woman, because no woman can resist this temptation.

It is very, very difficult to have much property and much religion at one and the same time. One cannot add to fortune what one steals from Christianity; one cannot dream of possessing the treasures of heaven, when we hoard a superfluity of wealth on earth. In a word, religion demands an undivided affection, but the possession of temporal blessings stands sadly in the way. For if the rich man give a portion of his wealth to religion, does he not reserve the greater part to feed his love of riches? and when he prostrates himself before the altar of the Lord, it often happens that in his heart, he is adoring his gold.

This is what St. Paul says, that he who gives his heart to riches is not less excluded from the kingdom of God, than he who burns his incense to idols. Oh! monstrous effect of riches, thus to stifle every sentiment of religion!

MASSILLON.

. . . . .

You possess many acres of land; some are planted with trees, some fields are well tilled. Besides these, you have vineyards, undulating hills, beautiful prospects, woods, rivulets, and pleasant promenades. Of what use are all these blessings to you! Six feet of earth await you at the end.

ST. BASIL.

## 128.—On the Excellence of the Soul

PÈRES HOUDRY, NEPVUE, BRETTEVILLE,  
and ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

“What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? or what exchange shall a man give?”—MATTHEW x. 28.

ACCORDING to St. Paul we have two natures, one exterior, the other interior, and these are the body and the soul. Thus, as we have two sorts of lives, we are subject to two kinds of deaths.

We have the corporal life, which we share with all created animals, and we have the life of the soul, which renders us like to the angels.

This latter is the spiritual life, pure, holy, and detached from all that is earthly. The source of the life of the body is the soul; the source of the life of the soul is God, who, dwelling in the soul by grace, maintains life in a supernatural and divine way, just as the soul supports the body in the natural way. And in the same way, the soul separates from the body when dead, so in like manner, the soul dies as soon as God abandons it, and is separated from Him.

Again, as the soul is incomparably greater in value than the body, and as God is infinitely above the soul, so when God abandons it, this death of the soul, caused by the withdrawal of God, is more dreadful, more frightful than the death of the body, when the soul departs from it. If there is anything which ought to make us detest sin, as being the greatest of all evils, it is, that it kills the soul,

by depriving it of the life of grace, and causing the loss of God, who is the Sovereign good, and who alone can make us eternally happy.

It follows then, that mortal sin deprives us of all the merits we may have acquired during our life, in the same way as death deprives men of all the goods and riches they leave behind them.

REV. PÈRE HOUDRY, S.J.

Let us reflect for a moment on what God has done for us ; we shall find sufficient matter to enlighten us on the love He has shown to our souls, "Come and see," says the prophet, "and I will relate the wonders God has done for my soul" (*Ps. ix.*)

If the Eternal Word came down from heaven and became Incarnate, it is for the sake of my soul ; if He was willing to be born in a stable, surrounded by vile animals, it was the immense love He had for my soul, and this it was that compelled Him to lower all His greatness. In coming amongst us, His first thought was, to save my soul.

Doubtless, all love the object to which they give their first thought ; confess it, ye who pollute your hearts for the sake of the love of a miserable creature.

But the first and uppermost thought that God the Son had, was the salvation of our soul ; this was, is, and ever will be, the wish of His sacred heart. With this love in view, let me address you in the words of the Apostle : "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (*Philip. ii. 5*). Let all your actions tend to the salvation of your souls, and let your first thoughts dwell on this only important object.

Has it been your conduct throughout life ? Has the safety of your soul been the first thought of your heart ?

LE PÈRE NEPVUE.



O adorable Saviour ! do not let us fall into so deplorable a blindness, as to prefer the good things of this world to our soul. Ah ! what have You not done to save our soul, that soul which cost You so much, and for the salvation of which You have shed the whole of Your precious blood. What a misfortune, or rather, how mad shall we be, if we lose it for a mere trifle ! What is there in the whole world, that can be compared to the soul, or what can we offer in exchange for it ? “ *Quam dabit homo commutationem, pro animâ sua ?* ” says the Son of God Himself.

Consequently, let us value it more than anything else ; let us forsake everything, rather than run the risk of losing our soul, and then we shall inherit an eternal happiness. To this, St. Chrysostom calls our attention, for in his Homily on the Gospel of St. Matthew, he says : “ He who has lost his house, money, servants, and all his property, may one day find them replaced and recovered ; but if he should happen to lose his own soul, he cannot replace it by another.”

BRETTEVILLE.

. . . . .

Would you know what is the value of your soul ? The only-begotten Son of God, wishing to redeem this soul of yours, has given, not a whole universe, not the earth or sea with all its treasures, but His own most Precious Blood, and from this you can judge of the greatness of the price. When, therefore, you come to lose your soul, after it has cost so much, at what price could you redeem it ?

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.  
*On Psalm xlviii.*

## 129.—On the Peace of the Soul.

FATHER SEGNERI and SS. EDMUND OF  
CANTERBURY, and AUGUSTINE.

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, do I give unto you.”—JOHN xiv. 27.

TRUE peace is a certain mark of predestination. All those who possess this peace being children of God, it is clear that the heavenly inheritance belongs to them : “Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (*Rom.* viii. 14).

It is this, that our Saviour means when He says : “Happy are those who have a peaceful mind, for they shall be called the children of God.” He gives to the elect the glorious title of sons of God, because they act, not as slaves, but as true children of God. Slaves are submissive to their master, through fear of suffering punishment, children, on the contrary, are submissive to their father, through respect and love, and they obey him with joy.

Such is the conduct of the saints of those glorious just of the first class, to whom we here allude. They, with their whole heart, were so resigned to the will of God that they unreservedly placed themselves at His disposal, and thus they showed that they were worthy to be children of God, since those “led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God” (*Rom.* viii.)

But why does our Saviour say, that those that are led by the Spirit of God will be called children of God?

Because these extraordinary saints are not merely sons by adoption, like the ordinary just, but that they are acknowledged and revered by the world.

It was also said of our Saviour Jesus Christ, they shall call Him the "Son of the Most High," because His holiness, His humility, His patience, wisdom, and meekness ought to prove (except to those who wilfully close their eyes to the true light) that He was the only Son of the Almighty. You are perhaps a child of God because you are pious; but do you live in such a way that you could feel within, that you are a child of God? The surest sign you could possibly show would be, to place all you have and all you want at the disposal of your Heavenly Father. But how can you lay claim to this title, you, whom the slightest opposition disturbs and provokes?

However, peace is like unto those rivers whose course flows on in one continuous stream; why are you not mindful of My precepts, says the Lord; your peace would be like a river (*Isaias*).

He who, by dint of perseverance, has at last conquered himself, passes his days in peace: *Sedebit in pulchritudine pacis* (*Isaias xxxii.*) He is at peace with all men, because he is without ambition, without envy, without attachment, to the good things of this world. He is in peace with himself, because his moral courage controls all sensual inclinations. He is in peace with God, because he obeys Him in all things, and as he always seeks to do His most holy will, his conscience never reproaches him.

How beautiful is this peace, says the prophet: *Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam*. How this peace surpasses human understanding! It is full of sweetness and charity: *Sedebit populus meus in pulchritudine pacis* (*Isaias*).

St. Augustine's definition is, that peace is a tranquillity which is born of order. The order which is seen in a well-guarded city, but frequently disturbed by civil wars, is not

sufficient to prove that peace is therein enjoyed, because its order is without tranquillity. The tranquillity which may be found in a peaceful city, badly regulated for want of subordination, does not suffice to prove that peace would be lasting, because tranquillity would there be without order. To enjoy true peace, tranquillity and order must be firmly united.

Let us now see who are those of whom our Saviour speaks of—those who are peacemakers (*Matt. v.*) This cannot be said of the wicked, who, however tranquil they may sometimes be in their condition of life, are nevertheless continually tortured in mind and conscience. It is therefore true to say that “there is no peace for the wicked.” They are not even the good, who have only ordinary virtue, and do not enjoy tranquillity; for although they may be on the right way, they nevertheless yield to temptations against the Spirit, and this troubles them incessantly. “They have looked for peace, and behold trouble” (*Jer. xiv. 19*).

Thus the only ones who can lay claim to the title of “peacemakers” are those perfect Christians, who are dead to themselves, in whom the flesh is brought under the subjection of the Spirit; those who are entirely submissive to God’s holy will, obeying Him like children, and allowing themselves to be guided in all things by the Holy Ghost.

REV. FATHER SEGNERI, S.J.  
*Meditations.*

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[ST. EDMUND was born at Abingdon, in Berkshire. His parents were pious and fervent Catholics. His father, when age was creeping on, retired to a monastery to prepare himself for a happy death, but his mother lived in the world and led a holy life, converting many by the mere force of her exemplary piety. Edmund was sent to Paris, and was soon so far advanced in learning, that he was made Professor of Mathematics and Philosophy. Pope Innocent III., hearing of his

worth, commissioned him to preach the Crusades, and Pope Gregory IX., wishing to recompense him for the zeal he displayed, appointed him to fill up the See of Canterbury, which had long been vacant ; but it was with great difficulty that he could be induced to accept the archbishopric, but through obedience, he undertook the heavy responsibility. The zeal he displayed in the reform of his clergy drew down the wrath of even some of his chapter ; and seeing that he could no longer countenance abuses he tried to reform, he secretly wended his way to France, and died at Poissy on the 16th of November 1242, after having been Archbishop of Canterbury during the space of eight years. Pope Innocent IV. canonised this holy bishop in the year 1247.]

*Letter from St. Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, about the year 1235, written and sent to the clergy of his diocese.*

We enjoin and entreat you to live in peace with all men, as much as it may depend on you. Exhort your parishioners and flock to be of one mind in the body of Jesus Christ, by unity of faith and the bond of peace. To settle amicably all disputes that may arise in your parishes, to put an end to dissensions and quarrels as much as lies in your power.

It is a duty for you, my brethren, to love peace, since God is the author of peace. He has recommended it to us. His wish is that peace shall reign on earth as well as in heaven, and from this peace, all that is eternal depends. "My dearly beloved," says the beloved disciple, "if God has so loved us, let us love one another."

. . . . .

Peace is the serenity of the soul, the tranquillity of the mind, the simplicity of the heart, the bond of love, and the union of charity.

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*De Verbi Dom.*

## 130.—On Salvation.

SS. EPHREM and CHRYSOSTOM,  
and PÈRE NEPVUE.

“With fear and trembling, work out your salvation.”

—PHILIPPIANS ii. 12.

THE wisdom of the pagan philosophers, and the eloquence of their orators, were confounded at the extraordinary sight of the death and triumphs of the early martyrs. The tyrants and judges were seized with astonishment when they witnessed the faith, courage, and even the gaiety of these holy champions of the faith. What will be our excuse at the tribunal of Jesus Christ if, after having been saved from persecution and torture, we have nevertheless neglected to love God, or even attempted to work out our salvation?

What a contrast! on one side the martyrs, ever attached to God in the midst of the severest trials; and on the other, the greater part of Christians who, in the bosom of a quiet peace, refuse to give to God a heart, which He certainly has a right to demand.

Once more, what could we do on that dreadful day, on which our eternity depends? Whilst the martyrs, full of a holy confidence, would show to Jesus the scars of their wounds, what should we have to show Him? Can we offer Him a lively faith, a sincere charity, a disinterested detachment from earthly things, successful victories over our passions, souls fond of silence and solitude, hearts pure and chaste, alms given to the poor, prayers, watch-

ings, and tears? Happy the man who is the bearer of these good works, for he will appear with confidence before Jesus Christ and His angels.

Holy martyrs, who have merited by your triumphs to be intimately united to God in heaven, deign to intercede on our behalf. We are but miserable sinners; but if you will give us the help of your prayers, the grace of Jesus Christ will enlighten our souls, and our hearts will be inflamed with the fire of divine love.

ST. EPHREM.

*Homily on Holy Martyrs.*

. . . . .

If a man were to give immense treasures to the poor, that good deed would not be equal in merit to that of a man who contributes to the salvation of one soul. This alms-deed is to be preferred to the distribution of ten thousand pounds; it is worth more than the whole world, however large it may appear in our own eyes; for a man's soul is more precious than the whole universe. God has nothing so much at heart, nothing gives Him so much pleasure, as the salvation of souls.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

*On Genesis.*

. . . . .

The work of our salvation is, properly speaking, our own individual work, because all the profit that accrues therefrom, is for ourselves. In other affairs, he who works is not he who has the profit. A husbandman sows and reaps, but, more than often, it is not for himself; a father works hard to increase his business or income, but it is to enrich his children, and they often turn out to be ungrateful; a judge is careful in his summing up, and becomes, as it were, a victim of the public. What does it come to? Simply a vain honour.

He who sows, says the Lord, is not often he who reaps:

“that it is one man that soweth, and it is another that reapeth” (*John* iv. 37). But in the work of our salvation, he who works is he who alone has all the profit; no one can share it with him. “If you sow,” says St. Paul, “you shall reap a harvest, in proportion to the seed you shall have thrown in.”

If you pray, if you fast, if you bestow alms, if you mortify your senses, if you crucify your flesh, all the profit will not only be your gain, but it will increase a hundred-fold in this life, and will last for ever in the next.

Salvation is our own work, because, if it meet with ill success, the loss will be our own; no one can share it with us.

In profitable but hazardous large businesses, people form themselves into a company, and seek for others to insure them from loss; they prefer a smaller profit provided they lessen their risk, and thus share with others the profit, provided they share the loss.

But in the affair of salvation, there can be no company formed, no insurance from loss; we must alone take the chance; all the profit, or all the loss, will be our own, and in this work, each works on his own account.

That zealous, good man, who has manifested so much anxiety for your salvation, who has taken so much pains, who has made your business, as it were, his own, will have a share in the profit if he succeed, but he will not share in the loss if he does not. That which will be your loss and your condemnation, will be his profit and his merit.

LE PÈRE NEPVUE.

*Reflexions Chrétiennes.*



## 131.—On Temptations.

SS. CHRYSOSTOM, FRANCIS DE SALES, AUGUSTINE,  
and ALPHONSE RODRIGUEZ.

“ Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation.”

—MATTHEW xxvi. 41.

IF God does not stop those temptations with which you are assailed, He does it for reasons which are sure to result to your advantage. First of all, He wishes you to know, and feel from experience, that you have become stronger, more powerful than your enemy. He wishes also that this temptation may keep you, as it were, in a balance, and that the dangers which threaten you prevent you from being exalted, on account of the graces you have received.

God wills also that you should be tempted, in order that the devil, who is in doubt if you have renounced him, at length knows, by your patience, that you are still true to your Lord and Saviour; more than this, God's intention is, that your soul should be fortified through temptation, and it thus remains stronger than ever.

In fine, God permits the enemy to attack you, in order that you may realise by that, how great and precious is the treasure He has intrusted to you. For Satan would not have attacked you so violently, had he not seen you elevated to a condition more glorious than that in which you were in before. It was that which irritated him so much when he saw Adam living in so glorious a garden; it was that, also, that made him so vexed against Job,

when he saw that God even bestowed on him so many praises.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

*Commentary on St. Matthew.*

. . . . .

You must be courageous amidst temptations, and never think yourself overcome so long as they displease you, observing well this difference between feeling and consenting, namely, we may feel temptations, though they displease us; but we can never consent to them, unless they please us, since the being pleased with them ordinarily serves as a step towards our consent.

Let, then, the enemies of our salvation lay as many baits and allurements in our way as they please, let them stay always at the door of our heart, in order to get admittance, let them make as many proposals as they can; still, so long as we remain steadfast in our resolution to take no pleasure in the temptation, it is utterly impossible that we should offend God.

With respect to the delectation which may follow the temptation, it may be observed that, as there are parts in the soul, the inferior and the superior, and that the inferior does not always follow the superior, but acts for itself apart, it frequently happens that the inferior part takes delight in the temptation without the consent, nay, against the will of the superior.

This is that warfare which the Apostle describes (*Gal. v. 17*) when he says, that the flesh lusts against the spirit, and that there is a law of the members and a law of the spirit.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

*Devout Life.*

. . . . .

To encourage us in temptations, it will be a great help if we consider the weakness of our enemy, and how little

he is able to do against us, seeing that he cannot make us fall into any sin against our own will. "Behold, my brethren," says St. Bernard, "how weak our enemy is; he cannot overcome but him who has a mind to be overcome." If a man who is going to fight were sure to overcome if he would, how joyful would he be? Would not he think himself sure of a victory which depended only upon his own will? With the same confidence we should fight against the evil one. For we know very well that the devil cannot conquer, if we ourselves will it not.

St. Jerome remarks the same upon the words which the evil spirit said to our Saviour, when, having carried Him up to the pinnacle of the temple, he counselled our Lord to throw Himself down headlong. "Cast Thyself down," said the tempter (*Matt.* iv. 6); and this, adds the Saint, is the true language of the devil, who desires nothing so much as the fall of all men. He can, indeed, persuade them to throw themselves down, but he cannot throw them down himself. The voice of the devil says, "Throw yourself down into hell." Answer him, "Do so yourself; you know the way; as for me, I will not;" for he cannot have the power to make you, if you have not the will to do it.

. . . . .

It is related in ecclesiastical history, that the Abbot Isidore was attacked for forty years by a violent temptation, and yet never yielded to it. We see also a great many examples of the holy fathers in the desert who, all their lives, were attacked with violent temptations, which they always sustained with a steady and equal confidence. "These were those giants," according to the prophet, "who were expert in war" (*Baruch* iii. 26). We ought to imitate them in this; and St. Cyprian, desiring to inspire us with the same confidence, makes use of the words of God in the prophet Isaias: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, and

called thee by thy name: thou art Mine. When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee, and the rivers shall not cover thee; when thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, and the flames shall not burn thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel" (*Isaias* xliii. 1-3).

Those words also of the same prophet are well fitted to strengthen us in the same holy confidence: "As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you" (*Isaias* lxvi. 13). Imagine with what marks of love, a mother receives her infant, when, being frightened at anything, it casts itself into her arms; how she embraces it, how she presses it to her breast, how she kisses and tenderly caresses it; but the tenderness of God for those who have recourse to Him in temptations and dangers is, without comparison, far greater.

ALPHONSE RODRIGUEZ.  
*On Temptations.*

. . . . .

During life's pilgrimage on earth we cannot be without temptations; we profit and advance only through temptations; we should not acquire self-knowledge unless we were tried. No crown without a victory, no victory without a struggle, and no fight without temptations and enemies.

If we were never tempted, we should never be tried; is it not, therefore, better to be tempted, than to be censured without being tempted?

ST. AUGUSTINE.  
*On Psalm lxix.*

## 132.—On Vocation to a State of Life.

PÈRE NEPVUE, MASSILLON, and  
ST. PHILIP NERI.

"Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called."

—CORINTHIANS vii. 20.

THERE is nothing more important, nothing better, than to enter into a state of life, to which God has called us, and to make choice of a vocation which His providence has destined for us. The whole universe is, so to speak, the house of God; all mankind are His family, both as His subjects, and His children. It is the master, who assigns to each his office. God is a Father and an infinitely wise Master, and He knows what each one is fitted for. But He is as good as He is wise, and thus it is, that He will not fail to assign to each of us a proper post, if only we leave everything to His Divine management.

This is not what the majority do; it is mere chance, caprice, a spirit of interested ambition, or a blind love, which leads them onwards; it is through such irregular motives which lead them to adopt a particular state of life. Can they fail to go astray if they put their trust in such bad hands! But, alas! they not only go astray, but they fall into the precipice. If nothing is so easy as to fall, so nothing is so difficult as to retrieve one's self.

The consequences of this failure are terrible; since when once we have gone astray it is difficult to limit its extent. From this it follows, that if we are not in that state of life to which God has called us, if we are not in that position

which Providence has marked out for us, nothing can succeed.

God had given us the qualifications and talents, suitable for the state of life to which He had called us; if we had accepted this, we could not have failed, with these dispositions, to have done well. We have taken or rather chosen another path, we are engaged in another employment which God had not destined for us, because we were not fit for it; can we then be astonished if we manage affairs badly, or if nothing succeeds with us?

And again, does not the success of our enterprises and the happiness of our life depend on God and on His blessing? People only wonder that a man who is so clever, a man with so much talent, merit and understanding, should meet with so little success, that all his efforts seem to be unavailing, and his business seems to diminish daily. It seemed to them that he could scarcely fail of success. Nothing was wanting but the blessing of God, and that alone was the cause of his failure. But how was it that God had not blessed his endeavours? It was, that he had entered into that state of life, into that employment without consulting God, without a vocation.

A bone which is out of its place is very painful, and causes the whole frame to suffer; so also, a man who is not in the proper place which Divine Providence marked out for him, is full of grief and vexation; he suffers much, and is the cause of suffering to others.

Is not this the reason why you see so few people content with their employment; is not this, perhaps, the source of all their troubles?

LE PÈRE NEPVUE.  
*Reflexions Chrétiennes.*

He who alone knows our strength, who sounds the depth of our hearts; He who has fixed from the begin-

ning the way which He wishes us to take—He alone should be the first to be consulted in the choice of a state of life we are about to select.

As it is, God, who, in His eternal council has prepared proper and necessary means to effect our good ; so it is He, who should be consulted in the first steps we take to arrive at a desirable determination ; for all those motives of interest, of rank, of birth, of talent, which have usually the uppermost voice in our choice of a state of life, are but deceitful guides, and almost always induce us to make a change.

He who does not follow the will of God in his choice of a state of life, is always in danger, and on the other hand, he who follows the path which our Lord has marked out for him, is always safe.

God wished that you should walk one way, you have followed another ; He had prepared sufficient grace to help you in the state of life He marked out for you, and He withholds it when you have chosen for yourself.

By His way He wished to lead you to salvation, and you have thwarted His will. He had given you an inclination to be pious and good, a heart devoid of deceit and vain glory ; all that showed that He destined you for the altar, and that solitude was your place.

However, you have selected a busy employment in the world : what obstacles do you not meet with in your wish to be saved ? What dangers do you not encounter ?

MASSILLON.

*Lenten Sermons.*

. . . . .

When seculars have once chosen their secular state, let them persevere in it, and in the devout exercises which they have begun, and in their works of charity, and they shall have contentment at their death.

ST. PHILIP NERI.

## 133.—On Death.

*(In General.)*

FATHERS SEGNERI and FABER.

“Thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.”

—GENESIS iii. 19.

THE time of our death is absolutely unknown to us: *Nescit homo finem suum*. There is nothing that can make us certain of a single moment of our life; on the contrary, how many chances there are of our being deprived of life in an instant!

Death can carry us off in a thousand ways; it may seize us boldly, it may take us by surprise. Perhaps, alas! death may be near, perhaps it may be within you, without your knowing it.

Picture to yourself a fish in a net; it is caught, and it does not perceive it; it plays, it darts about with other fish who are without fear. Nevertheless, its career is ended; and who knows how soon your end may be near? Perhaps the net is cast, and it may be drawn up without your being aware of it. Jeremiah the prophet says: “I have caused thee to fall into a snare, and thou art taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware of it; thou art found and caught, because thou hast provoked the Lord” (*Jer.* l. 24).

Why do you not then open your eyes, and see the danger in which you are? Hold yourself in readiness, be on your guard, prepare quickly, and make as good a confession as you would wish to make on your death-bed; for



you know not when the time will come. The hour of your death, is it still far off? You can wish it, you can hope that it is so, but you do not know it: *Nescitis*. It is the Son of God even who says that you do not know it, for He tells it to all: *Omnibus dico*. Can He deceive us? Is not His testimony—His word—sufficient?

Do not rely on your youth, on your health, on your good looks, on your strength of mind; possessing all these blessings, you know not if you will be alive to-morrow?

Our Saviour says it to every one—whenever you are, young, old, in sickness, in health—watch and pray, for you know not when the time will come. Look at that man of the world, he fancies that he is happy, and yet he is the most wretched of men. He at least anticipates approaching happiness; he, nevertheless, is only pursuing a phantom. How could he be happy? He knows neither true happiness, nor the way to procure it. He is as one asleep, and dreams of castles in the air; he mistakes appearances for the reality, and at last he wakes at the moment of his death, and finds himself denuded of everything.

How awful is this slumber! for the worldling wakes and finds that there is no time for repentance, no time to seek for the true happiness he has so oft despised, and the pleasures which seduced him have exhausted all his strength.

Do not allow me, O my God, to fall into a sleep so frightful. And if I have fallen into sin, do not wake me at the moment of my death, like that madman to whom You said, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee."

FATHER SEGNERI.

*Meditations.*

. . . . .

The act of dying is very simple and very short. Yet all men fear it, and some fear it so much, that it casts a shadow over their whole lives. It is the separation of

body and soul, the end of that companionship between them, which is a mystery we have never been able to fathom, and which we should have imagined, if we had not been otherwise taught, involved our very existence, our personality.

The act of dying is, moreover, a punishment, and the most ancient of all punishments. It is the Creator's first punishment of the sinning creature, invented by the Creator Himself, the first promulgated invention of His vindictive justice. It can therefore, under any circumstances, hardly be a light one, whether we consider the Being who thus punishes, or the thing punished, which is sin. Indeed, it is a penalty, which nothing could render tolerable to the creature, except the Creator Himself suffering it, and diffusing the balm of His own death over the universal deaths of men. It is true that men have desired to die, and they have sinned by the desire, because it was the fruit of an unsanctified impatience. Others have desired to die, but then they were men who had also in them the grace to desire to suffer. Some have desired to die, because they pined for God, and the pains of death were a small price to pay for so huge a good.

Some deaths have been so beautiful, that they can hardly be recognised as punishments. Such was the death of St. Joseph, with his head pillowed on the lap of Jesus. Yet the twilight bosom of Abraham was but a dull place, compared with the house of Nazareth, which the eyes of Jesus lighted. Such was Mary's death, the penalty of which was rather in its delay. It was a soft extinction, through the noiseless flooding of her heart with divine love.

All who die well are safe with God. As the life is, so shall the end be.

FATHER FABER (Orat.)  
*Sermons.*

## 134.—On Death.

*(A Good and Bad Death.)*

SS. BERNARD, PHILIP NERI, and PÈRES  
GIROUST and HOUDRY.

"The souls of the just are in the hands of God, and the torments of death shall not touch them."—WISDOM iii. 1.

"Zambri died in his sins which he had sinned, doing evil before the Lord."—  
3 KINGS xvi. 19.

HOW consoling it is to see a just man die! His death is good, because it ends his miseries; it is better still, because he begins a new life; it is excellent, because it places him in sweet security. From this bed of mourning, whereon he leaves a precious load of virtues, he goes to take possession of the true land of the living.

Jesus acknowledges him as His brother and as His friend, for he has died to the world before closing his eyes from its dazzling light. Such is the death of the saints, a death very precious in the sight of God.

But, on the other hand, see how shocking is the death of the wicked. The least evil is, the loss of all the good things of this world; the separation of body and soul is more dreadful still, but the worst of all is the devouring flame, the gnawing worm that never dies.

ST. BERNARD.

. . . . .

When that frail frame, that body, of which he was far from being indulgent, begins to succumb under human infirmity, to sink under the laws of nature, what keeps it

back? What delays its final extinction? The fruit is ripe; it begins to loosen from the pending stalks; a gentle shake will make it fall upon the ground.

How consoling to hear the good man say to himself: I am dying, I have soon to bid adieu to the world; that is to say, I am about to resign worldly blessings, which I have hitherto despised, and which, in fact, are of little value to a Christian soul. Whilst I was master of my body, I could not trust it, and I was not allowed to pamper it with delicacies. What use, then, will it be to wish to preserve that which I am told not to love?

I die!—that is to say, I shall sigh no more in this land of exile; I shall no longer be exposed to dangerous enemies, to uneasiness, to vexatious troubles, inseparable from a life which is always full of trouble. I die!—that is to say, I shall not, O Lord, offend Thee any more. I shall have no more temptations to struggle against, no sins of thought, word, or deed, no more dangerous battles to fight.

If this detachment is not always so perfect as here described, it is always with a resignation that belies every sentiment opposed to the divine commands; it calls to mind the holy thoughts that have been fixed on his memory from early youth; it makes a virtue of that which God thinks necessary, and making use of death in order to fortify himself against death itself, he gives up blessings, for the very reason that they were given to him, as transitory benefits.

Thus far, this good man looks upon himself as a victim which God sacrifices to His glory. No other altar than the bed on which he lies, where he is humbled under the hand which strikes him. It is there that the victim is prepared and sacrificed, there glory penetrates his bosom, there the fire of divine love consumes him, and there the holocaust is perfected.

Thy will, O Lord, be done; this sacrifice is due to You,

and I am well repaid if Thou deignest to accept it. At one time he looks upon himself as a culprit, whom God punishes, and mercy ends by purifying and chastening him. For when we say, a just man, we ought not to understand by that, that he is a saint of the first order, one free from the slightest imperfection, one whose merits exceeds what God in justice asks from His creature. The sick penitent condemns himself and blesses the Judge who punishes him, in order to forgive him, and who does not spare himself, in order that he might the better be spared.

At another time, in submissive humility, he adores the Almighty power of the Creator, who made him, and who disposes of His work as He pleases. God so wills it; God ordains it; may His holy will be done. At last, at the sight of Jesus on the Cross, he feels encouraged, and at the same time confounded. You have suffered, O Lord, before for me, and how incomparably greater have Your sufferings been. Like unto You, I die on the cross; happy shall I be, if I may reign with You in heaven.

LE PÈRE GIROUST.

. . . . .

At the hour of death nothing is more frightful to the wicked than the recollection of their sins. At that hour God will repay them with all the fears and remorse which may have lain dormant during life. His judgments then will be much more just, and much more holy.

St. Chrysostom sums this up in few words, for he says: *Pondus et pondus, mensura et mensura*. There is a weight and a weight, a measure and a measure; a weight during life, a weight at the hour of death.

During the life of that libertine, impurity passed off as gallantry; at death it is an unbearable fire within, equal to the flames of hell: *Pondus et pondus*. A cruel usury is looked upon as a clever stroke of business; at death,

it is theft and robbery : *Mensura et mensura*. An alms coldly refused during life, is allowed ; at the hour of death it is cruelty and homicide : *Pondus et pondus*. A calumny is enjoyable, an allowable revenge during life ; at death it is harsh injustice : *Mensura et mensura*. In fact, there is a difference in looking at a sin clothed in the garb of alluring pleasure, and a sin exposed to view in all its ugly nakedness ; and it is at the hour of death that the wicked will see their sins in the latter form or shape. Thus it was said formerly by the Prophet, " The sorrows of death surrounded me, and the torrents of iniquity troubled me."

In vain will an able confessor try to drive away the vision from his mind, in order to prevent the man from falling into despair. Everything, even the Sacraments of Jesus Christ, will remind him of his sins.

LE PÈRE V. HOUDRY, S.J.

. . . . .

We must accept our own death, and that of our relations, when God shall send it to us, and not desire it at any other time ; for it is sometimes necessary that it should happen at that particular moment, for the good of our own and their souls.

ST. PHILIP NERI.

## 135.—On the Particular Judgment.

PÈRES DU PONT and CROISSET.

“It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.”

—HEBREWS ix. 27.

THE time appointed for this particular judgment, is the precise moment of death. For although God, by a particular arrangement of His justice, might have been willing to condemn some sinners before their death, in order to keep men in fear by an exemplary punishment, nevertheless it is His will to judge in an invisible manner, when the soul leaves the body; and at this very moment, all will be tried, settled, and finished. The Judge hears the accusers, pronounces the sentence, and puts it into execution without delay.

It is, then, this dreadful moment I ought to have ever before my eyes, since it will be the beginning of either my happiness, or of my eternal condemnation.

O fatal moment which leads to eternity! The soul which is summoned to appear, will at this moment be alone, deprived of its body, separated from all visible creatures, accompanied only by its deeds. For, before its separation from the body, parents, relations, friends, priests, may be found around the bed; there is not a single soul can follow it, not one who can protect it in the other world.

The soul of a king is of no more value than that of a peasant; the soul of a rich man may be poorer than that of the meanest beggar; the most clever may be outrivalled by the most ignorant; dignities and riches are only fleeting

advantages, and talents are of no consideration in that other life, where good works are only rewarded.

Meditate, my brethren, on this last moment, and employ well every moment of your life; for on this last one depends a life which will never end.

FATHER DU PONT.  
*Meditations.*

Conceive, if it is possible, what must be the horrible dread of a soul which feels that it hangs to its body, as it were, by a thread, and that in two or three minutes, it will have to appear before the awful tribunal of God.

At that time, its conscience will be its worst enemy; it is the conscience which will, even before the last sigh, make manifest every thought and word, and, so to speak, will foreshadow the judgment and sentence. It feels that time will soon be no more, and it begins to see the horizon of an awful eternity; the uncertainty of its fate, the fear of eternal punishment, the reasons why it should fear it—all, all reduce the soul to a state, which may be called an anticipated Hell.

This poor soul, on the point of appearing before God (that supreme Judge, whom it well knows it has so often insulted), finds itself laden with debts, and there is now no time to pay them, no means of cancelling them. It would certainly have been able to find enough in the merits of the precious Blood to satisfy the Divine justice; but is it in a state to say, that it is worthy of the promises of Christ?

Troubled and frightened as it is, has it the presence of mind and tranquillity sufficient for that?

But this person expires, and at the very moment the trial has commenced, the judgment is pronounced, the sentence is executed; at that very moment that person's soul enters into an awful eternity; at that instant, if it be damned, it feels the extent of the torments it will ever



have to suffer. No regard will be paid to age, employments, or quality; of all the titles, the only one which will remain, the only one which will be taken into consideration after death, is that of Christian, and on that title we shall all be judged.

The promises made in baptism, the strict obligations which have been contracted, the precepts of the Christian law, and the maxims of the Church, will be examined into, at this judgment. If this soul should be in a state of mortal sin, even if it be a guilty desire, or a sin of thought, it is at that moment condemned to everlasting flames. Howsoever hard may be this judgment, howsoever frightful may be the sentence, the soul itself feels the justice of its sentence.

There, excuses are useless; no need of alleging weakness, surprise, bad example, or violence of temptation; it sees, it feels all its error, all those vain pretexts, all those frivolous reasons which served during life as excuses or palliations; these will then serve to increase our regret, and will enkindle within us nought but anger and indignation.

All is lost; time, all means of salvation, the infinite price of the blood and death of the Redeemer; all is lost for me, and all is lost for ever, since I lose God Himself.

REV. PÈRE CROISSET.

*Retreats.*

## 136.—On the Last Judgment.

BOURDALOUE and FATHER SEGNERI.

“The day of the Lord shall come, a cruel day and full of indignation, and of wrath and fury, to lay the land desolate, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it.”  
—ISAIAH xiii. 9.

THIS last judgment will not only be favourable and honourable to, but anxiously longed for, by the just and the elect.

For their glory, says St. Chrysostom, will shine in the light of day, and their happiness, and even the crowning of their desires will be, that not only their sincerity of purpose, but their purity of intention, will be at last displayed; their glory will be, that they are thoroughly known, since not to have been known, was the original cause of all their disgrace.

This, ye faithful souls, who, notwithstanding the corruptions and vices of the age, have served your God in spirit and in truth, this is what must, amidst the hardships of life, have strengthened your resolution, and filled you with consolation.

At that dreadful moment, when the book of conscience will be open, your hope, enlivened by the sight of the Sovereign Judge, and on the point of being fulfilled, will support you, and well repay you for the unjust persecutions of the world.

Whilst the reprobate, confounded, troubled, and astonished, shall advance with downcast eyes, you, because

will be the hour of your justification, will appear with confidence.

Now, envy and calumny cast at you their poisoned darts; but then, envy will be forced to be silent, or, if it should speak, it will be in your favour; calumny will be refuted, and truth will shine forth in all its lustre. Nevertheless, you will rejoice in the secret witness of your own heart, which is preferable to all the praises of the world.

Say with St. Paul, It is of little consequence what men think of me, since it is my God who will one day be my judge. "For he that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 *Cor.* vii.) Or say with the prophet Jeremias, "It is Thou, O Lord, who judgest justly, and triest the reins and the hearts, let me see Thy revenge on them: for to Thee have I revealed my cause" (*Jer.* xi. 20).

The Son of God will come to glorify humility in the persons of the humble. It is a justice He will pay to His elect. That humility, that simplicity, that patience in suffering without a thought of revenge, which worldlings will have looked upon as weakness of mind, or meanness of spirit, God will come to crown these, and will convince the world that therein consisted true fortitude, true grandeur of soul, true wisdom.

It is "then," says the Book of Wisdom (chap. v.) "shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labours." It is then that the wise ones of the world, freethinking unbelievers, will not only be surprised, but disconcerted to see those very persons, whom they looked down upon as the refuse of the world, placed upon thrones of glory. It is then that many, amazed and almost beside themselves, will cry out, These are they whom we have often laughed to scorn. Fools that we were! their life appeared to us to be ridiculous, and their way of life as folly. Nevertheless,

now behold them, raised to the rank of children of God, and their inheritance is with the saints.

It is then that the pride of the world will, perforce, bear witness, although by compulsion, to the humility of the elect of God ; and the whole effect of our Lord's promise will be perceived clearly, and in a particular manner: "Every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (*Luke xiv.*).

BOURDALOUE.  
*Advent Sermon.*

I am always sure, O my God, of having deserved Your anger ; when even I tried to do penance, I was uncertain whether my heart was not deceived, or that I had found favour in Your eye. The day of Your vengeance being near, I have nothing to expect but a judgment without mercy. Have I not reason to fear ? but I knew that the fear of Your judgment would be of service to me.

It is that holy fear which has peopled, and will people deserts. It would make me fly from the seductions of the world, it would make me wish to go into retreat, and through that, would be to me a haven of safety. Create in my heart, O my God ! this wholesome fear, which has made the security of the just banish from it that fatal indifference, which is the greatest danger of a Christian.

We should, indeed, be mad, and very blind, not to think of this last judgment, or to think of lightly of it.

This was not the case with St. Bruno ; he was in the constant habit of selecting the last day as his meditation ; it was ever present in his mind, and he never lost sight of the severe account we shall have one day to render to the Sovereign Judge.

If we try to follow the example of this glorious Saint, how changed will be our lives ! How soon we shall become new men !

REV. FATHER SEGNERI.

## 137.—On Purgatory.

“There shall not enter into heaven anything defiled.”—APOCALYPSE xxi. 27.

“Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing.”—MATTHEW v. 26.

### *What the Saints and Fathers of the Church have written on Purgatory.*

IN the second book of Machabees, chap. xii., we read that Judas Machabeus, having made a gathering, sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection.

Not only does Holy Scripture approve of this, but it praises it, by saying, that it is a holy and wholesome thought.

Luther and other heretics boldly deny that the two books of the Machabees are not of the number of sacred books; but, in addition to the fact that these books had for more than three centuries, been acknowledged as canonical, we have an express decree of the third Council of Carthage, at which St. Augustine assisted, and who subscribed his name thereto, along with the other Fathers.

Before this Council there were many authors who doubted of their authenticity, but since the decree of this said Council, the whole Christian world have received them as canonical books.

St. Chrysostom teaches us what has been the practice of the Apostles, for in his 49th Homily to the people of Antioch we read: “It is true that the Apostles had decreed that when celebrating the Divine mysteries a commemoration for the dead should be made, for they well knew that the dead would profit by it.” It is thus, that the saintly Doctor speaks, and he affirms that it was by

order of the Apostles that prayers should be said for the faithful departed.

But if we wish for a witness of the apostolical tradition, can we desire for one more satisfactory than that of one of the disciples of Jesus and His Apostles?

It is St. Denis, the Areopagite, who distinctly explains, in the book of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, wherein he tells of many things instituted by God in favour of those who have departed from this life in a Christian-like way. He says, that the priest should offer up a devout prayer for the dead; he adds, that this prayer is to implore the Divine mercy to pardon all the faults of the deceased, which he may have committed through human frailty.

We cannot question this truth after the decision of the third Council of Carthage, attested by St. Augustine, and since confirmed by the Sixth Synod. This Council not only declares that the two books of the Machabees are canonical, but it forbids the celebrant of the Divine mysteries from offering up the Holy Sacrifice, unless he is fasting. This is why, says he, if, after dinner, you are obliged to pray to God for the repose of the souls of the faithful departed, you should make use of simple prayers. Moreover, the Council of Nice speaks in somewhat a similar strain. When a bishop dies, notices must be sent to all the churches and monasteries in his diocese, in order that prayers, masses, &c., may be offered up for his soul.

Who can teach us the holy customs of the early Church better, than so many prelates and doctors, no less illustrious for their piety than for their learning, who have been ocular witnesses of what they have written about?

This is what St. Augustine says: "We read in the books of Machabees that sacrifices were offered up for the deceased, but one can find nothing like unto this in the ancient Scriptures. The authority of the Church, which approves of so holy a practice, ought, however, to be of great weight."

Again, among the several prayers that are recited at the altar, there are some offered to God for the faithful departed (*De cura pro mort*). We must therefore conclude, from the words of this great Saint, that when we might be mistaken as to what he says of Purgatory, as Calvin wished (which is very erroneous), we must confess that what he has said about the custom of praying for the dead (a custom acknowledged by the whole Church) must be incontestably true; how could so learned a doctor not know of a custom which was in use throughout the whole Church, a custom he was a daily witness of?

We have other testimonies quite as genuine, such as those of St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, St. Cyril, St. Chrysostom, Tertullian, St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, and St. Jerome. All these are quoted by Belarmin, in his "Treatise on Purgatory."

If the general feeling of all nations and tribes who acknowledge that there is a Supreme Being is an invincible argument against the atheists, who do not acknowledge one, it is an argument no less convincing, against those heretics who reject the doctrine of Purgatory, for this belief is common to Pagans, Turks, Jews, and to the majority of civilised persons who pray to the dead.

The light of reason will tell us that there are three classes of persons in the world. The first, are those who are so virtuous and holy that they merit an eternal reward; the second, are the wicked, and those who die in the state of mortal sin, and these are justly condemned to everlasting fire; the third class retain the middle state, they have, in truth, performed many good deeds worthy of reward, but at the same time they have committed venial sins, which deserve a temporal punishment at least, thus these said sins may not have been punished or atoned for in this world, consequently we must come to the conclusion that they will be expiated in the other. This is the argument of St. Augustine (*Enchirid.* 109).

## 138.—On Hell.

PÈRE BIROAT and FATHER FABER.

"Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels."—MATTHEW XXV. 41.

THERE is, alas! a difference between the sufferings of this world and the torments of hell. The sufferings of this world are limited, and do not affect the whole man; the mind suffers only in proportion to its union with the body, and one member alone, endures pain in proportion to its sympathy with the brain; but the tormenting fires of hell enter into every power of the soul, and every member of the body.

The pains we suffer on earth are, so to speak, but momentary, and death puts an end to them; but in hell they have no end; death has no power there, and their immortal bodies partake of the immortality of the soul.

Again, in this world we always find some little consolation, or some temporary relief from pain, but in that place of torture every pain will be extreme, and without intermission; our friends, from whom we might have expected some consolation, will then be our enemies; for if they are saved, they will have no sympathy with our sufferings; and if they are lost, as we are lost, they will only increase and aggravate our pains.

The fires of hell will perform two frightful functions with regard to the damned; one will serve as a chain to bind them to the place, the other will be a horrible mirror



reflecting their sins, and their frightful consequences, the sight of which will increase their torments.

Although they say that hell is a region of darkness, that the action of light will be merged in the power of burning, it can, however, be said that there will be a certain dark and opaque light which will reflect all that is detestable and hateful, and that this fire, which surrounds them, will be like a blazing theatre, which will show them a thousand horrid phantoms. But the most terrible image that this mirror will reflect, will be, that of the justice of Almighty God, eternally incensed ; and it is the opinion of some theologians that the greatest punishment of this fire, consists in being the sign of the anger of God, which will continually show them, and that, too, by an inevitable necessity, a God always angry with them, and always ready to damn them.

FATHER BIROAT.  
*Third Friday of Lent.*

It is fearful to think upon the union of God's power, wisdom, and justice, in producing this world of punishment, this wonderful, mysterious, and terrific part of creation, which is, in its desolate mysteries, as much beyond our conception, as the joys of heaven are in their resplendency. Nevertheless, we will leave the great evil, the loss of God, out of view, and all the horrible details of the cruelties of physical torture. Bating all these things, what sort of a life will the life in hell be, after the resurrection ?

It will be a life, where every act is the most hateful and abominable wickedness. We shall understand sin better then, and be able more truly to fathom the abysses of its malice. Yet every thought we think, every word we speak, every action we perform, we shall be committing sin, and committing it with a guilty shame and terror, which will be insupportable.

To this we must add the mental agonies of hell. Envy, despair, spite, rage, gloom, sadness, vexation, wounded sensitiveness, weariness, loathing, oppression, grief, dejection, wildness, bitterness,—all these are there, in all their kinds, and in unspeakable intensity. Think of a violent access of sorrow now; think of the rawness of lacerated feeling, think of a day's leaden load of oppression. Now, without pause, without alleviation, without even vicissitude of suffering, here is a blank, huge, superincumbent eternity of these things, with an undistracting multiplicity of wretchednesses, far beyond the worst degrees they could ever reach on earth.

The life in hell, is a life from which there is a total absence of sympathy and love. This is an easy thing to say; but it is not so easy to penetrate into its significance.

The life in hell is also a life of terror, and a life, too, without pauses, diminutions, or vicissitudes. No angel ever wings his way thither, on an errand of consolation. All the united eloquence of hell could not bring one drop of water from earth's thousand fountains, to cool the torture for one lightning's flash of time. All is unintermitting.

Yet this is the bright side of hell! How bitter the words sound; yet it is not bitterness which prompts them, but the intense fear which pierces through me like splinters of ice at this moment. This is hell, with the hell left out, the crowning woe, the loss of God.

FATHER FABER (Orat.)  
*Spiritual Conferences.*

## 139.—On Heaven.

PÈRES CRASSET and NEPVUE, S.J.,  
and ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

“God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, for the former things are passed away.”—*APOCALYPSE* xxi. 4.

[JEAN CRASSET was born in Dieppe, on the 3d of January 1618, and died in 1692. This true servant of God formed one of the band of the followers of St. Ignatius, and will always be esteemed as one of the many learned members of the Society of Jesus. In the year 1685 he published a work, which has often been reprinted; it is called “Christian Reflections for Every Day in the Year.” He also has left us a History of Japan, and his detailed account of the Acts of the Martyrs, is more interesting, than in the work written by Père Charlevoig. His devotional works have been much admired, and may still be read with profit.]

I BELIEVE, O my God, that if I serve You faithfully in this life, I shall be eternally happy after my death, and that You will bid me enter into the palace of Your glory, where there will be all that I can wish for, and where there will be nothing to fear; where there will be good without evil, pleasure without pain, glory without confusion, peace without war, joy without sadness, repose without trouble, and life everlasting. I hope that in heaven I shall see You, that I shall love You, that I shall possess You, that I shall rejoice with You; that I shall see You the first cause, that I shall love essential beauty, that I shall possess sovereign goodness, that I shall enjoy a happy eternity. I believe that in You, O God! I shall see all that is beautiful, that

I shall love all that is good, that I shall possess all that is rich, that I shall taste all that is sweet, and shall hear all that is melodious.

Alas! that we should give ourselves so much trouble in amassing riches and property; that we should torment our mind and body in the success or non-success of our plans; that we should pass anxious days and sleepless nights in trying to escape from a possible or probable anticipated misfortune! Why such useless troubles and fears?

Had you worked to gain heaven, every moment of pain would produce an additional lustre to your crown of glory. But because you work for this world, you labour incessantly and gain nothing; you sow in the wind, and reap only the tempest. All that you have done, all that you have suffered, will be of no avail; all your ridiculous projects will end in smoke, all your works are dead, and with them, you will die.

PÈRE CRASSET.  
*La Foi.*

. . . . .

Paradise! what is it?

It is the most wonderful invention of the wisdom of God, the masterpiece of His mighty power, the boundary of His liberality and magnificence, the worthy cost of the precious blood of a God; a boon so grand that God, all-powerful as He is, could give us nothing better than Himself: *Quid enim poterat dare seipso melius, vel ipse?* says St. Bernard. For it is He Himself who is given to the blessed in heaven, and can He give anything better than Himself?

To obtain this happiness, He only asks us for a little restraint on our passions, a sigh or tear from a contrite and humble heart, a drop of water given for His sake. Is this too much? If we refuse so small a tribute, do we not deserve to be deprived of the reward for evermore?

Paradise is an immense boon, since it is the final touch of the magnificence of a God. God manifests His riches, His liberality, in all other gifts, but it is only in heaven, says the Prophet, where He appears to be magnificent. The earth, the sea, the sky, the stars, and all the wondrous and visible works of the Lord, manifest His power and majesty; but, in Paradise alone His wondrous magnificence is to be seen. Every blessing that God bestows upon His creatures here below are but as globules dropping from that torrent of joy which will inundate the souls of His elect. Sometimes God, in His mercy, allows His servants to feel a foretaste of delight, and He does it to make them understand that if so much sweetness be granted to them while here on earth, what an ocean of joy is prepared for them in Paradise.

Woe to us, if we prefer this our exile, to our own true home. We shall indeed deserve to be ever unhappy, if we are so blind as to love the world.

NEPVUE.

*Reflections Chrétiennes.*

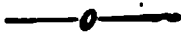
. . . . .

We take a pleasure in listening to old experienced travellers, who can tell us of the exact distance, situation, extent, and peculiarities of cities they have visited, but to the traveller who is on his road to heaven, we do not go out of our way to inquire how far we are removed from our eternal home.

If we wilfully neglect to seek the road that leads to God, we shall find that we are as far off, as earth is to heaven. But if we sincerely try to reach that blessed city, we shall soon find ourselves at its gate. That swerving from the right path, does not depend upon the distance, but on the length of our life's journey.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF SUBJECTS.



	PAGE		PAGE
A.		Chastity and Purity . . . . .	
Abstinence and Fastings . . . . .	182	Circumcision of our Saviour . . . . .	79
Actual Grace of God . . . . .	45	Commandments of God . . . . .	333
All our bad Passions . . . . .	326	Communion . . . . .	192
Alms-deeds . . . . .	330	Confidence in God . . . . .	53
Ambition . . . . .	238	Conscience . . . . .	335
Anger . . . . .	240	Conversion of Sinners . . . . .	338
Annunciation . . . . .	140	Cross, Mystery of the . . . . .	109
Apostolic and Catholic Church . . . . .	165	D.	
Ascension of our Lord . . . . .	112	Dangers of the World . . . . .	205
Assumption of our Blessed Lady . . . . .	155	Dangers of Prosperity . . . . .	302
Atheism and Unbelief . . . . .	246	Death—in general . . . . .	447
Avarice . . . . .	243	Death—a good and bad one . . . . .	450
B.		Descent of the Holy Ghost . . . . .	116
Balls, Theatres, &c. . . . .	315	Devotion to our Blessed Lady . . . . .	123
Baptism . . . . .	185	Devotion and Piety . . . . .	400
Belief in Christ . . . . .	69	Dignities of the World . . . . .	215
Blasphemy . . . . .	250	Discord, Law-suits, &c. . . . .	256
Blessed V. Mary and her Feasts—		Divinity of our Saviour . . . . .	64
Devotion to our Blessed Lady . . . . .	123	Duties of the World . . . . .	212
Immaculate Conception . . . . .	127	E.	
Nativity of B. V. Mary . . . . .	131	Effeminacy and Sensuality . . . . .	260
Holy Name of Mary . . . . .	134	Employment of Time . . . . .	341
Presentation of Mary . . . . .	137	Envy and Jealousy . . . . .	263
Annunciation . . . . .	140	Epiphany . . . . .	86
Visitation . . . . .	144	Eucharist as a Sacrifice . . . . .	195
Purification . . . . .	147	Eucharist as a Sacrament . . . . .	198
Seven Dolours . . . . .	151	Excellence of the Soul . . . . .	430
Assumption . . . . .	155	F.	
Holy Rosary . . . . .	158	Fashion, Immodest Attire, &c. . . . .	286
Our Lady of Mount Carmel . . . . .	162	Fastings and Abstinence . . . . .	182
C.		Faith . . . . .	345
Calumny and Slander . . . . .	253	Fear of God . . . . .	5
Catholic and Apostolic Church . . . . .	165		

	PAGE
Five Sacred Wounds of our Lord	105
Final Impenitence . . . . .	234
Flattery . . . . .	267
Frequent Relapses into Sin . . .	231
Friendship . . . . .	348

## G.

Gambling . . . . .	271
God, His Gifts, Graces, &c., viz.—	
Love of God . . . . .	1
Holy Fear of God . . . . .	5
Will of God . . . . .	9
Word of God . . . . .	12
Law of God . . . . .	16
Presente of God . . . . .	21
Providence of God . . . . .	24
Service of God . . . . .	27
Want of Fervour in His Service	31
Mercy of God . . . . .	35
His Mercy in Illness . . . . .	38
His Mercy in Tribulations . . .	42
Grace of God . . . . .	45
His Sanctifying Grace . . . . .	49
Confidence in God . . . . .	53
Zeal for God . . . . .	56
Good Example . . . . .	351
Good Works . . . . .	354

## H.

Habitual Sin . . . . .	225
Hardness of Heart . . . . .	274
Hell . . . . .	463
Heaven . . . . .	466
Hidden Life of Jesus . . . . .	89
Holidays and Sundays . . . . .	179
Holy Name of Jesus . . . . .	83
Holy Name of Mary . . . . .	134
Holy Ghost . . . . .	116
Holy Trinity . . . . .	119
Holy Rosary . . . . .	158
Holy Fear of God . . . . .	5
Holy Catholic Church . . . . .	165
Holy Communion . . . . .	192
Holy Eucharist as a Sacrifice . . .	195
Holy Eucharist as a Sacrament . . .	198
Holiness and Perfection . . . . .	357
Honours of the World . . . . .	215
Human Respect . . . . .	360
Humility . . . . .	363
Hypocrisy . . . . .	277

## I.

	PAGE
Idleness and Sloth . . . . .	280
Ignorance . . . . .	283
Immaculate Conception . . . . .	127
Immodest Attire, &c. . . . .	286
Impurity . . . . .	289
Incarnation, The . . . . .	60
Infancy of Jesus . . . . .	89
Ingratitude . . . . .	292
Intemperance . . . . .	295

## J.

Jealousy and Envy . . . . .	263
Jesus Christ our Lord, His Feasts, &c.—	
His Incarnation . . . . .	60
His Divinity . . . . .	64
Belief in Christ . . . . .	69
On His Love for Men . . . . .	72
His Nativity . . . . .	75
Circumcision . . . . .	79
His Holy Name . . . . .	83
Infancy and Hidden Life . . . .	89
Transfiguration . . . . .	92
Agony and Passion . . . . .	98
Resurrection . . . . .	102
Sacred Heart and Wounds . . . .	105
Ascension . . . . .	112
Judgments, Rash . . . . .	305
"    Particular . . . . .	454
"    The Last . . . . .	457

## K.

Keeping the Commandments . . . .	333
----------------------------------	-----

## L.

Lady of Mount Carmel . . . . .	162
Larceny and Theft . . . . .	319
Last Judgment . . . . .	457
Law-suits, Discord, &c. . . . .	256
Law of God . . . . .	16
Love of God . . . . .	1
Love of Jesus for Man . . . . .	72
Love of our Neighbour . . . . .	366
Love of our Enemies . . . . .	369
Lying and Trickery . . . . .	299

# INDEX OF SUBJECTS.

471

	PAGE		PAGE
<b>M.</b>			
Material Churches . . . . .	175	Prudence . . . . .	413
Matrimony . . . . .	202	Purgatory . . . . .	460
Maundy Thursday . . . . .	95	Purity and Chastity . . . . .	416
Maxims of the World . . . . .	208	Purification of Mary . . . . .	147
Meditation and Mental Prayer . . . . .	372	<b>R.</b>	
Meekness . . . . .	375	Rash Judgments . . . . .	305
Mercy of God . . . . .	35	Regularity and Order . . . . .	390
"    "    in Illnesses . . . . .	38	Relapses into Sin . . . . .	231
"    "    in Afflictions . . . . .	42	Religion . . . . .	419
Ministry of God's Church . . . . .	171	Resurrection of our Lord . . . . .	102
Mount Carmel, Our Lady of . . . . .	165	Retreats . . . . .	427
Modesty . . . . .	378	Riches, their Use and Abuse . . . . .	427
Mortal sin . . . . .	218	Risen Jesus . . . . .	102
Mortification . . . . .	382	Rosary of B. V. M. . . . .	158
Mystery of the Cross . . . . .	109	<b>S.</b>	
<b>N.</b>		Sacrament of Baptism . . . . .	185
Name of Jesus . . . . .	83	"    Penance . . . . .	189
Name of Mary . . . . .	134	"    Matrimony . . . . .	202
Nativity of our Lord . . . . .	75	"    Holy Communion . . . . .	192
Nativity of Mary . . . . .	131	"    Holy Eucharist . . . . .	198
Neighbour, Love of our . . . . .	366	Sacred Heart and Wounds of Jesus . . . . .	105
<b>O.</b>		Salvation . . . . .	437
Obedience . . . . .	386	Sanctifying Grace . . . . .	49
Occasions of Sin . . . . .	228	Scandal . . . . .	309
Order and Regularity . . . . .	390	Self-love . . . . .	312
Our Lady of Mount Carmel . . . . .	162	Sensuality and Effeminacy . . . . .	260
Our bad Passions . . . . .	326	Service of God . . . . .	27
<b>P.</b>		Seven Dolours . . . . .	151
Particular Judgment . . . . .	454	Sin, namely, Mortal Sin . . . . .	218
Passion of our Lord . . . . .	95	"    Venial Sin . . . . .	222
Passions, our Bad . . . . .	326	"    Habitual Sin . . . . .	225
Peace of the Soul . . . . .	433	"    Occasions of Sin . . . . .	228
Penance, Sacrament of . . . . .	189	"    Relapses into Sin . . . . .	231
Penance as a Virtue . . . . .	393	Sinners, Conversion of . . . . .	338
Perfection and Holiness . . . . .	357	Slander and Calumny . . . . .	253
Perseverance . . . . .	396	Sloth and Idleness . . . . .	280
Piety and Devotion . . . . .	400	Soul, its Excellence . . . . .	430
Prayer . . . . .	406	Soul, the Peace of the . . . . .	433
Predestination . . . . .	410	Sundays and Holidays . . . . .	179
Presence of God . . . . .	21	<b>T.</b>	
Presentation of Mary . . . . .	137	Temptations . . . . .	440
Poverty, Voluntary, &c. . . . .	403	Theatres, Balls, &c. . . . .	315
Prosperity of the Wicked . . . . .	302	Theft and Larceny . . . . .	319
Providence of God . . . . .	24	Time, Employment of . . . . .	341



	PAGE		PAGE
Transfiguration . . . . .	92	W.	
Trickery and Lying . . . . .	299	Want of Fervour . . . . .	31
Treasures of the Church . . . . .	168	Washing of the Feet . . . . .	95
Trinity, the Holy . . . . .	119	Wicked, Prosperity of the . . . . .	302
U.		Will of God . . . . .	9
Unbelief and Atheism . . . . .	246	Word of God . . . . .	12
V.		World and its Dangers . . . . .	205
Vainglory . . . . .	322	World and its Maxims . . . . .	208
Venial Sin . . . . .	222	World and its Duties . . . . .	212
Visitation of Mary . . . . .	144	World and its Honours . . . . .	215
Vocation to a State of Life . . . . .	444	Z.	
Voluntary Poverty . . . . .	403	Zeal for God . . . . .	56

# ALPHABETICAL LIST OF AUTHORS QUOTED, BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES, AND LIST OF EXTRACTS FROM THEIR WRITINGS.

—o—

	PAGE		PAGE
ÆLRED, ST. and Ab. C. (A.D. 1166)		AUGUSTINE, ST.— <i>Continued.</i>	
Biographical Notice . . . .	45	On the Mystery of the Cross .	109
On the Grace of God . . . .	45	On the World and its Dangers	205
AMBROSE, ST. and B. C. (A.D. 397)		On the World and its Maxims	211
Biographical Notice . . . .	208	On Habitual Sin . . . . .	225
On the Mercy of God in Ill-		On Atheism and Unbelief . .	246
nesses . . . . .	41	On Lying and Trickery . . .	301
On the World and its Maxims .	208	On Prosperity of the Wicked .	302
On Anger . . . . .	242	On Rash Judgments . . . .	308
On Discord, Law-suits, &c. .	259	On Self-love . . . . .	314
On Ingratitude . . . . .	292	On Conscience . . . . .	337
On Intemperance . . . . .	298	On Meekness . . . . .	377
On Lying and Trickery . . .	301	On Order and Regularity . .	392
On Vainglory . . . . .	324	On Prayer . . . . .	409
On Holiness and Perfection .	359	On Peace of the Soul . . .	436
On Meekness . . . . .	375	On Temptations . . . . .	443
On Modesty . . . . .	378		
On Purity and Chastity . . .	418	BASIL, ST., B. C. D. (A.D. 379)	
ANTOINE, DELA PORTE (Carmelite).		Biographical Notice . . . .	240
On the Word of God . . . .	12	On Anger . . . . .	240
On Perseverance . . . . .	396	On Envy and Jealousy . . .	265
ASTÈRE, ST. (Suffered martyrdom		On Flattery . . . . .	269
under Diocletian)		On Impurity . . . . .	289
Biographical Notice . . . .	416	On Prudence . . . . .	413
On Purity and Chastity . . .	416	On Riches . . . . .	429
ATHANASIUS, ST., B. C. (A.D. 373)		BELLARMIN, CARD. (A.D. 1621).	
Biographical Notice . . . .	61	Biographical Notice . . . .	49
On the Incarnation . . . .	61	On Sanctifying Grace . . .	49
AUGUSTINE, ST., B. C. D. (A.D. 430)		BERNARD, ST., Ab. C. (A.D. 1153)	
Biographical Notice . . . .	16	Biographical Notice . . . .	60
On the Will of God . . . .	11	On the Incarnation . . . .	60
On the Law of God . . . .	16	On the Circumcision . . . .	82
On the Providence of God . .	26	On the Sacred Heart . . . .	108
On Want of Fervour . . . .	34	On Devotion to our B. Lady .	126
On the Nativity of our Lord .	75	On the Immaculate Conception	130
On the Epiphany . . . . .	89	On Habitual Sin . . . . .	227

	PAGE		PAGE
<b>BERNARD, ST.—Continued.</b>		<b>CARRANZA, Archbishop of Toledo</b>	
On Calumny and Slander . . . . .	253	(A.D. 1576)	
On Mortification . . . . .	385	Biographical Notice . . . . .	369
On Piety and Devotion . . . . .	402	On the Love of our Enemies . . . . .	369
On Death . . . . .	450	<b>CASTILLO, O. S. D. (A.D. 1720)</b>	
<b>BERTHIER, S.J. (A.D. 1782)</b>		Biographical Notice . . . . .	192
Biographical Notice . . . . .	220	On Holy Communion . . . . .	192
On Mortal Sin . . . . .	220	<b>CHRYSTOSTOM, ST., B. C. D. (A.D. 407)</b>	
<b>BÉRULLE, CARD. (A.D. 1629)</b>		Biographical Notice . . . . .	18
Biographical Notice . . . . .	64	On the Law of God . . . . .	18
On the Divinity of Christ . . . . .	64	On the Providence of God . . . . .	24
<b>BIROAT, PRIOR (A.D. 1666)</b>		On the Mercy of God in Afflic-	
Biographical Notice . . . . .	106	tions . . . . .	42
On the Five Wounds . . . . .	106	On the Epiphany . . . . .	86
On Habitual Sin . . . . .	226	On the Mystery of the Cross . . . . .	109
On Hell . . . . .	463	On the Holy Ghost . . . . .	116
<b>BOSSUET, Bp. of Meaux (A.D. 1704)</b>		On Baptism . . . . .	185
Biographical Notice . . . . .	230	On the World and its Duties . . . . .	212
On Occasions of Sin . . . . .	230	On Final Impenitence . . . . .	237
<b>BOUDON, H. M., Archdeacon of</b>		On Anger . . . . .	241
Evreux (A.D. 1702)		On Avarice . . . . .	243
Biographical Notice . . . . .	27	On Blasphemy . . . . .	251
On the Service of God . . . . .	27	On Calumny and Slander . . . . .	255
On Devotion to our B. Lady . . . . .	123	On Envy and Jealousy . . . . .	264
<b>BOURDALOUE, S.J. (A.D. 1704)</b>		On Immodest Attire . . . . .	286
Biographical Notice . . . . .	31	On Ingratitude . . . . .	292
On the Want of Fervour . . . . .	31	On Vainglory . . . . .	322
On the Grace of God . . . . .	47	On Alms-deeds . . . . .	331
On the Circumcision . . . . .	79	On Christian Friendship . . . . .	349
On Jesus Risen . . . . .	102	On Good Works . . . . .	354
On the Annunciation . . . . .	140	On the Love of our Neighbour . . . . .	366
On the Purification . . . . .	147	On Excellence of the Soul . . . . .	432
On Penance . . . . .	189	On Salvation . . . . .	437
On Frequent Relapses . . . . .	231	On Temptations . . . . .	440
On Calumny and Slander . . . . .	253	On Heaven . . . . .	468
On Gambling . . . . .	271	<b>COLOMBIÈRE, DE LA, S.J.</b>	
On Hypocrisy . . . . .	277	(A.D. 1682)	
On Idleness and Sloth . . . . .	280	Biographical Notice . . . . .	36
On Ingratitude . . . . .	293	On the Mercy of God . . . . .	36
On Scandal . . . . .	309	On Confidence of God . . . . .	55
On Conscience . . . . .	335	On the Agony and Passion . . . . .	98
On Conversion of Sinners . . . . .	338	On the Ascension . . . . .	112
On Penance as a Virtue . . . . .	393	On the Holy Trinity . . . . .	121
On Religion . . . . .	419	On the Immaculate Conception . . . . .	127
On the Last Judgment . . . . .	457	On our Lady of Mount Carmel . . . . .	162
<b>BRETTEVILLE, ABBÉ (A.D. 1688)</b>		On Fasting and Abstinence . . . . .	182
Biographical Notice . . . . .	5	On the World and its Honours . . . . .	215
On the Fear of God . . . . .	5	On Venial Sin . . . . .	222
On the Excellence of the Soul . . . . .	432	On Final Impenitence . . . . .	236
<b>CAMARET, PÈRE</b>		On Intemperance . . . . .	295
On Self-love . . . . .	313	On Love of our Neighbour . . . . .	366
		On Religion . . . . .	421

	PAGE		PAGE
<b>CORDIER, PÈRE (A.D. 1695)</b>		<b>DUNEAU L'ABBÉ (A.D. 1811)</b>	
Biographical Notice . . . . .	202	Biographical Notice . . . . .	50
On Matrimony . . . . .	202	On Sanctifying Grace . . . . .	51
<b>CRASSET, S.J. (A.D. 1692)</b>		<b>EDMUND, ST. B.C. (A.D. 1242)</b>	
Biographical Notice . . . . .	466	Biographical Notice . . . . .	435
On Heaven . . . . .	466	On the Peace of the Soul . . . . .	436
<b>CROISSET, S.J. (about the year 1660)</b>		<b>EPHREM, ST. (A.D. 379)</b>	
Biographical Notice . . . . .	25	Biographical Notice . . . . .	423
On the Providence of God . . . . .	25	On Retreats . . . . .	423
On the Want of Fervour . . . . .	33	On Salvation . . . . .	437
On Zeal for God . . . . .	57		
On the Infancy of Jesus . . . . .	89	<b>FABER, F. W. (Oratorian Father)</b>	
On the World and its Dangers . . . . .	205	(A.D. 1863)	
On Ambition . . . . .	238	Biographical Notice . . . . .	6
On Employment of Time . . . . .	342	On the Holy Fear of God . . . . .	6
On Mortification . . . . .	384	On the Presence of God . . . . .	22
On Perseverance . . . . .	398	On the Service of God . . . . .	28
On Piety and Devotion . . . . .	400	On the Mercy of God . . . . .	35
On Predestination . . . . .	410	On the Circumcision . . . . .	81
On the Particular Judgment . . . . .	454	On the Purification . . . . .	149
<b>CYPRIAN, Saint and Martyr (A.D. 258)</b>		On the Seven Dolours . . . . .	152
Biographical Notice . . . . .	263	On the Holy Rosary . . . . .	158
On the Word of God . . . . .	15	On the Holy Eucharist . . . . .	198
On Holy Communion . . . . .	194	On Alms-Deeds . . . . .	332
On the Holy Eucharist . . . . .	201	On Humility . . . . .	364
On Mortal Sin . . . . .	221	On Death . . . . .	448
On Atheism and Unbelief . . . . .	249	On Hell . . . . .	464
On Envy and Jealousy . . . . .	263	<b>FENELON, Archbishop of Cambrai</b>	
On Immodest Attire . . . . .	288	(A.D. 1715)	
On Scandal . . . . .	310	Biographical Notice . . . . .	315
<b>DAMIEN, CARDINAL PETER (A.D. 1073)</b>		On Theatres, Balls, &c. . . . .	315
Biographical Notice . . . . .	105	On Prayer . . . . .	406
On the Sacred Heart . . . . .	105	<b>FLECHIER, Bishop of Nimes (A.D. 1710)</b>	
<b>D'ARGENTAN, PÈRE</b>		Biographical Notice . . . . .	43
On the Holy Name of Mary . . . . .	134	On the Mercy of God in Afflic- tions . . . . .	43
On the Visitation . . . . .	145	On the Holy Ghost . . . . .	117
On Holiness and Perfection . . . . .	357	On the Catholic Church . . . . .	167
<b>DE LA RUE, S.J. (A.D. 1725)</b>		On the Ministry of God's Church . . . . .	171
Biographical Notice . . . . .	291	On Material Churches . . . . .	175
On Impurity . . . . .	291	On the Holy Eucharist . . . . .	195
<b>DOZENNES, PÈRE</b>		On the World and its Dangers . . . . .	205
On the Divinity of our Saviour . . . . .	66	On Faith . . . . .	345
<b>DU JARRY, PÈRE (A.D. 1730)</b>		<b>FRANCIS, ST., of Sales, B.C.D.</b>	
Biographical Notice . . . . .	75	(A.D. 1622)	
On the Nativity of our Lord . . . . .	75	Biographical Notice . . . . .	1
On the Visitation . . . . .	144	On the Love of God . . . . .	1
<b>DU PONT, S.J. (sometimes spelled Du Ponté) (A.D. 1624)</b>		On the Word of God . . . . .	14
Biographical Notice . . . . .	92	On Rash Judgments . . . . .	305
On the Transfiguration . . . . .	92	On Theatres, Balls, &c. . . . .	316

	PAGE		PAGE
<b>FRANCIS, ST.—<i>Continued.</i></b>		<b>JEROME, ST., B.C.D. (A.D. 420)</b>	
On Friendship . . . . .	348	Biographical Notice . . . . .	19
On Humility . . . . .	363	On the Law of God . . . . .	19
On Meditation . . . . .	373	On the Incarnation . . . . .	63
On Obedience . . . . .	386	On Belief in Christ . . . . .	71
On Prayer . . . . .	406	On the Ministry of God's Church	174
On Temptations . . . . .	440	On Flattery . . . . .	270
<b>FROMENTIERE, Bishop of Aire</b>		On Friendship . . . . .	350
(A.D. 1684)		<b>JOHN OF GOD, ST. (A.D. 1572).</b>	
Biographical Notice . . . . .	70	Biographical Notice . . . . .	306
On Belief in Christ . . . . .	70	On Rash Judgments . . . . .	307
<b>GARNIER, S.J. (A.D. 1681)</b>		<b>JOLY, PÈRE (A.D. 1775).</b>	
Biographical Notice . . . . .	200	Biographical Notice . . . . .	370
On the Holy Eucharist . . . . .	200	On the Love of our Enemies . . . . .	370
<b>GIROUST, J., S.J. (A.D. 1689)</b>		<b>L'ABBÉ DE LA TRAPPE.</b>	
Biographical Notice . . . . .	271	On Rash Judgments . . . . .	307
On Gambling . . . . .	271	<b>LA FONT, Prior (A.D. about 1750).</b>	
On Prudence . . . . .	413	Biographical Notice . . . . .	283
On Death . . . . .	450	On Ignorance . . . . .	283
<b>GREGORY, ST., THE GREAT,</b>		On Faith . . . . .	347
<b>P.C.D. (A.D. 604)</b>		<b>LACTANTIUS.</b>	
On the Fear of God . . . . .	8	On Theatres . . . . .	318
On the World and its Dignities	217	<b>LAMBERT, L'ABBÉ (A.D. 1836).</b>	
On Human Respect . . . . .	362	Biographical Notice . . . . .	56
On Obedience . . . . .	380	On Zeal for God . . . . .	56
<b>GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN, ST.</b>		On Keeping the Commandments	333
(A.D. 389)		On Obedience . . . . .	387
On Love of our Enemies . . . . .	371	<b>LEJEUNE, L'Oratoire (A.D. 1672).</b>	
<b>HAINEUVE, PÈRE</b>		Biographical Notice . . . . .	256
On Effeminacy . . . . .	260	On Discord . . . . .	256
On Order and Regularity . . . . .	390	On Theft and Larceny . . . . .	319
<b>HELIODORE of Paris (Capuchin)</b>		<b>LEO, ST., THE GREAT, P.C.D.</b>	
On Lying and Trickery . . . . .	300	(A.D. 461.)	
<b>HOUDRY, V., S.J. (A.D. 1729)</b>		On Sanctifying Grace . . . . .	52
Biographical Notice . . . . .	53	On the Transfiguration . . . . .	97
On Confidence in God . . . . .	53	On Baptism . . . . .	185
On the Washing of the Feet . . . . .	95	<b>LE VALOIS, LOUIS (A.D. 1700).</b>	
On the Holy Trinity . . . . .	119	Biographical Notice . . . . .	114
On the Immaculate Conception	127	On the Ascension . . . . .	114
On the Presentation of Mary . . . . .	137	<b>LOUIS OF GRENADA, O.S.D.</b>	
On Ambition . . . . .	238	(A.D. 1588).	
On Impurity . . . . .	289	Biographical Notice . . . . .	61
On Intemperance . . . . .	296	On the Incarnation . . . . .	62
On Lying and Trickery . . . . .	299	On Self-love . . . . .	312
On Scandal . . . . .	311	<b>MASCARON, Bishop of Tulle .</b>	
On Alms-deeds . . . . .	330	(A.D. 1705).	
On the Conversion of Sinners . . . . .	339	Biographical Notice . . . . .	274
On Predestination . . . . .	410	On Hardness of Heart . . . . .	274
On the Excellence of the Soul	430	<b>MASSON, PÈRE.</b>	
On Death . . . . .	452	On the Sacrament of Penance	189

	PAGE		PAGE
MASSILLON, Bishop of Clermont (A.D. 1742).		PHILIP NERI, St. (A.D. 1595).	
Biographical Notice . . . . .	11	On our bad Passions . . . . .	326
On the Holy Will of God . . . . .	11	On Employment of Time . . . . .	344
On the Word of God . . . . .	13	On Perseverance . . . . .	399
On the Grace of God . . . . .	46	On Devotion . . . . .	402
On Belief in Christ . . . . .	69	On Prayer . . . . .	409
On the World and its Maxims . . . . .	209	On Vocation to State of Life . . . . .	446
On Occasions of Sin . . . . .	230	On Death . . . . .	453
On Final Impenitence . . . . .	234		
On Avarice . . . . .	244	RODRIGUEZ, ALPHONSE (A.D. 1616):	
On Dangers of Prosperity . . . . .	303	Biographical Notice . . . . .	326
On Human Respect . . . . .	360	On Vainglory . . . . .	325
On Mental Prayer . . . . .	372	On our bad Passions . . . . .	326
On Riches . . . . .	427	On Meditation and Mental Prayer . . . . .	373
On Vocation to a State in Life . . . . .	444	On Modesty . . . . .	380
MONTMOREL, PÈRE.			
On the Epiphany . . . . .	87	SEGNERI, S.J. (A.D. 1694).	
On Sundays and Holidays . . . . .	179	Biographical Notice . . . . .	4
		On the Love of God . . . . .	4
NEPVUE, S.J. (A.D. 1708).		On Venial Sin . . . . .	224
Biographical Notice . . . . .	9	On Employment of Time . . . . .	341
On the Will of God . . . . .	9	On Good Works . . . . .	355
On the Presence of God . . . . .	21	On Mortification . . . . .	382
On Baptism . . . . .	185	On the Peace of the Soul . . . . .	433
On Hardness of Heart . . . . .	276	On Death . . . . .	447
On all our bad Passions . . . . .	326	On the Last Judgment . . . . .	459
On the Excellence of the Soul . . . . .	430		
On Vocation to a State of Life . . . . .	444	SPINOLA, SAINT and MARTYR	
On Heaven . . . . .	466	(A.D. 1622).	
NICOLAS OF DIJON.		Biographical Notice . . . . .	38
On the Holy Rosary . . . . .	159	On the Mercy of God in Illness . . . . .	38
NIEREMBERG, E., S.J. (A.D. 1658).			
Biographical Notice . . . . .	72	TEXIER, PÈRE, S.J. (A.D. 1687).	
On the Love of Jesus for Man . . . . .	72	Biographical Notice . . . . .	165
NOUET, S.J. (A.D. 1680).		On the Holy Catholic Church . . . . .	165
Biographical Notice . . . . .	8	On the Treasures of the Church . . . . .	168
On the Fear of God . . . . .	8	On the World and its Duties . . . . .	213
On the Mercy of God in Illness . . . . .	39	On Mortal Sin . . . . .	218
On Zeal for God . . . . .	58	On Good Example . . . . .	351
On the Holy Name of Jesus . . . . .	83		
On the Infancy of Jesus . . . . .	91	VAUBERT, S.J. (A.D. 1716).	
On the Passion of our Lord . . . . .	99	Biographical Notice . . . . .	194
On the Assumption . . . . .	155	On Holy Communion . . . . .	194
On Hardness of Heart . . . . .	275	VERJUS, A., S.J. (A.D. 1706).	
		Biographical Notice . . . . .	131
		On the Nativity of Mary . . . . .	131

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Morocco or russia, in case . . . . .	0	9	6
Morocco, antique, and clasp . . . . .	0	10	6
Ivory . . . . .	0	8	6

*Garden of the Soul:*

New edition, with all the additional Devotions in general use. Two hundredth thousand. Cloth . . . . .	0	0	6
Large paper, superior . . . . .	0	0	8
Embossed, gilt edges, with Ordinary of the Mass . . . . .	0	1	0
French morocco, gilt . . . . .	0	2	0
Ditto, rims and clasps . . . . .	0	3	0
Calf . . . . .	0	3	6
Best morocco . . . . .	0	4	0
Gilt . . . . .	0	5	0

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